

THE CHIEF EVILS OF THE TIMES

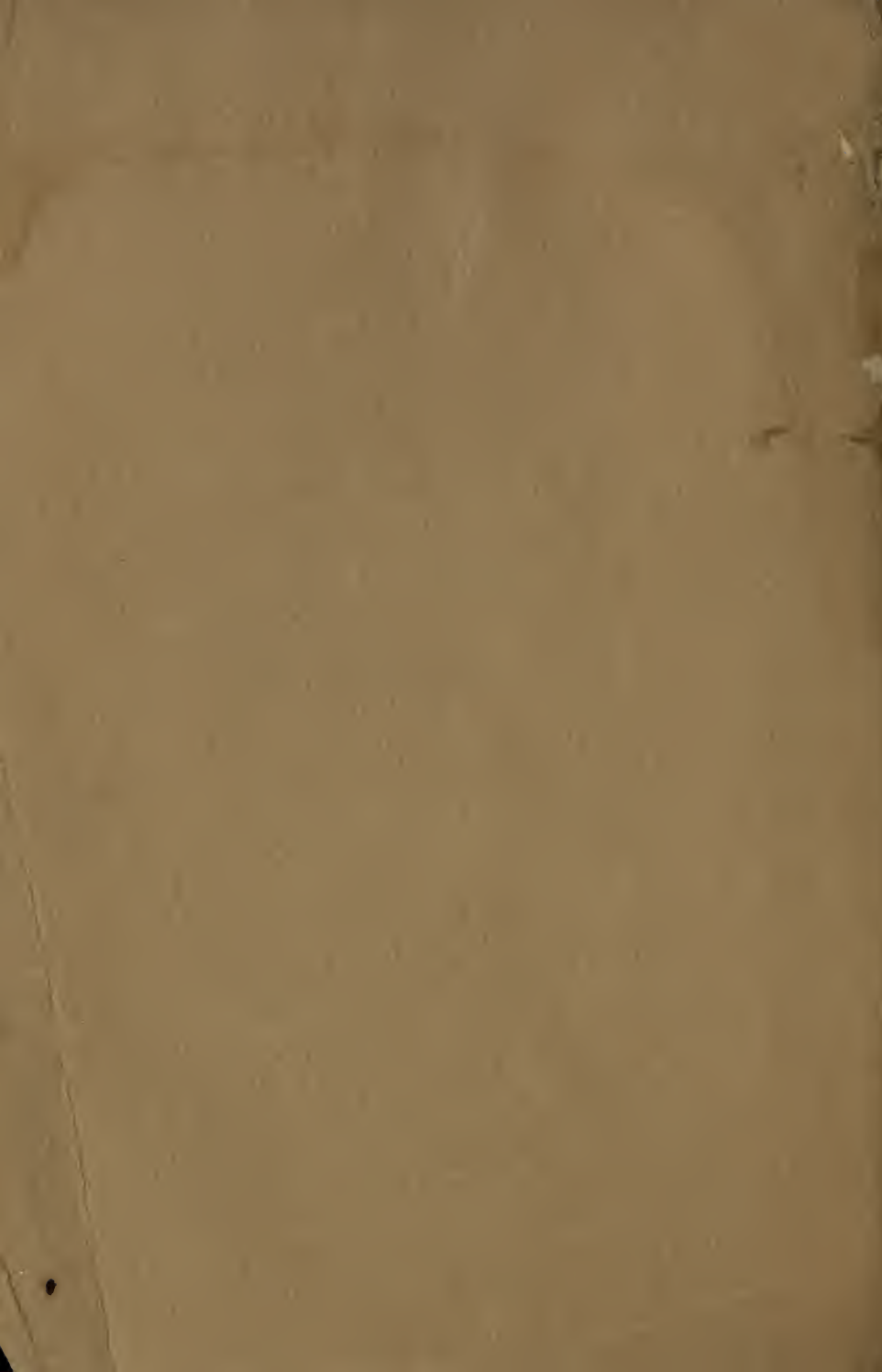
A LENTEN COURSE OF SEVEN
SERMONS

BY

Rev. H. NAGELSCHMITT

New York

JOSEPH F. WAGNER (Inc.)



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Nihil Obstat

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THE CHIEF EVILS OF THE TIMES

I. RECKLESSNESS AND FRIVOLITY

"This then I say and testify in the Lord, that henceforward you walk not as also the gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts."—Ephes. iv, 17, 18.

The holy season of Lent reminds us that it is our duty to examine ourselves, to think over our sins and shortcomings, and by means of penance and amendment of life to turn again to God, whom we have forsaken. The Church calls to us at this season: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi, 2). "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive" (Is. lv, 6, 7).

Lent is a time for penance and conversion; but we ought to know for what it behooves us to do penance, and in what respects we require to be converted. We ought of course to do penance for our sins, abandon the path of wickedness, and return to the way of righteousness and justice. Every man's own conscience will tell him how to act, if only he examines himself honestly in the presence of God, who sees and knows all things. But, just as each individual has his besetting sins, so has every age its peculiar vices, which give rise to all our prevalent misery and suffering, and are difficult to detect because we are so entangled in them. Every one can discover and amend his own personal defects, if only he earnestly endeavors to do so; but it is less easy to perceive the vices of the age, for we are all more or less infected with them, and consequently are blind to their results; moreover each person has his own opinion regarding them, and many fail to grasp the prevalence of the evil.

I purpose to address you during Lent on the subject of the vices of the age and the disasters to which they lead, suggesting, as far as I can, remedies for them. The chief failings of the age in which

we live appear to be: *recklessness, unbelief, disobedience, selfishness, ambition, love of pleasure, and, human respect.*

In the course of my sermons I may perhaps allude to sins and defects from which you are free; and you may therefore feel inclined to say that my words are not applicable to you, for those that are whole need not a physician, but rather those that are sick. I should have good reason to rejoice and to thank God if my whole congregation could speak thus. We are, however, all more or less infected with the follies of the age, and we should only aggravate the evil if we deceived ourselves and protested that we were free from it. It is well for us to know and recognize the enemy who is incessantly trying to undermine our peace and welfare, for otherwise we shall not be on our guard against him. Whenever an epidemic breaks out in a town or village, the inhabitants take care to ascertain its symptoms and to learn the best manner of protecting themselves against it. Let us show equal care and conscientiousness in examining the causes underlying the spiritual evils of the time, evils that become more deadly day by day, and threaten to destroy the whole moral and social order. I will take as to-day's subject *recklessness*, and discuss (1) its nature and (2) its consequences.

I. It is impossible to read a newspaper or to associate with people without becoming aware of the fact that all classes are oppressed by a sense of discomfort, discouragement and uncertainty. No one is contented with the present state of affairs, and all dread the future, unless some efficacious form of help is forthcoming. Almost everyone, whether he be learned or unlearned, politician or businessman, is engaged in devising some remedy for the general distress. All agree in thinking some change to be absolutely necessary, but there are innumerable opinions regarding the manner in which this change can be effected, and the form that it should take. I have no intention of discussing the various proposals made in newspapers and magazines, or at public meetings; I wish merely to point out that most people look for amendment from without, not from within. This is the feature that presents itself whenever there is a general conviction that some change in condition and in the social life is absolutely necessary. Men seek the cause of

all the evils from which they suffer in external circumstances, not in themselves. They hope to find a remedy in something outward, and have no idea that they must begin by reforming their own disorderly and sinful way of life, if a general improvement is to be effected. At the present time there is only too much reason for complaints, and for fears of what may yet be in store; mankind is in urgent need of help, but, before it is capable of receiving assistance, each individual ought to begin by God's grace to amend and cure himself.

Yes, we may well turn upon those who clamor for reform, and say to them: "Physician, cure thyself; cast out the beam from thine own eye, before thou attemptest to remove the mote from thy brother's eye." This one consideration is enough to show how rightly recklessness may be described as one of the chief faults of our age. Every one is anxious to improve the world, and sets to work knowing very little about the sins and passions prevalent among mankind, and incapable of correctly ascertaining the source and extent of the evils of the age. Hence he talks at random, and all his proposals for reform fall wide of the mark, or actually aggravate the malady that they are intended to cure. A man may rightly be described as reckless who judges of important matters without adequate knowledge, without serious reflection, without due consideration of the arguments for and against. A reckless person gives advice offhand; he speaks and acts without thinking of the consequences of his words and deeds, whereas he has no business at all to express an opinion, and is incapable of making any useful suggestion.

This kind of recklessness in judgment, speech and action is extremely common at the present day, and is especially characteristic of popular agitators and socialistic leaders. We may perhaps say that it is the chief source of the evils from which we suffer, for there are few among these men whose thoughts and desires, whose words and works are controlled by the dictates of Christianity and of reason. There are few who consider the results that may follow sooner or later from what they proclaim and do; they are deaf to the voice of reason, that priceless gift which distinguishes man from all other creatures, and enables him to know God; they refuse to obey the Divine law, that enlightens our understanding and guides us through the maze of this life, and they listen only to the prompting of their own unruly passions and desires. Instead of refrain-

ing from action until circumstances and probable results have been properly weighed, men allow themselves to be influenced by momentary impressions and by the impulses of their senses. This is what I mean by recklessness, and you will be convinced that it is a very prevalent fault, if you take the trouble to observe the actions of those about you.

Recklessness is generally assumed to be a fault peculiar to the young, and it is an undeniable fact that the young people at the present day are reckless. Many throw away their opportunities of acquiring education, and of developing their faculties of heart and mind, because they will not study with perseverance. Many plunge into vice and folly, and associate with bad companions, because they are carried away by sensual pleasures, and are not guided by conscience and God's precepts. Many a young girl gives herself up to vanity and frivolity, and runs after silly amusements, simply for want of thought, yielding to whims and fancies instead of acting on sound principle.

But though the young are undoubtedly thoughtless, those of maturer years are perhaps equally guilty. Many a man forgets duty and family, when he is with companions who encourage him to drink and gamble. Many throng to hear an agitator preaching atheism and emancipation from lawful restraint, and utter no word of protest when he ridicules all that is most sacred. They are reckless, caring only for what amuses them at the moment, and never giving a thought to the future. Others undertake to discuss matters of great importance, and talk pompously, without having taken the trouble to gain any real knowledge of the subject on which they are so ready to lay down the law. In their thoughtless vanity and the desire to be like other people, many join associations in which Christianity and the Church are held up to ridicule, and so they gradually lose their faith, and fall an easy prey to the pernicious doctrines of Socialism, abandoning altogether the practice of religion.

Need I allude to the overhasty judgments pronounced so frequently upon the actions and lives of neighbors? It is a matter of everyday occurrence to hear all sorts of suspicions and slanders uttered without a moment's reflection. Some who could not answer a single question in the catechism, do not hesitate to criticize and discuss religious topics, although they are quite indifferent to religion and everything connected with it,—is not this recklessness? And is

it not the very height of recklessness for a man to go on heaping sin upon sin, without ever giving a thought to penance and amendment of life?

Enough has been said to show you that recklessness, or want of thought, is really a malady, or rather a sin, very prevalent at the present day. People are superficial in their judgments, and incapable of devoting their attention seriously even to important matters and of exerting themselves to accomplish anything. They take everything lightly, and fail to appreciate both the evil of sin and the excellence of virtue, and consequently they care very little about either. It is to them a matter of complete indifference whether their words and actions accord with the duties of their station, and their position, as men and Christians, as fathers, citizens and subjects, nor do they trouble about the results of what they say and do. They are quite ready to play the part of saints or sinners, as best suits their convenience and advantage; they attend to the present and disregard the future.

Such are the characteristics and outward manifestations of recklessness; we shall have no difficulty in tracing its disastrous and injurious results.

II. A reckless man shrinks from all earnest thought and exertion of good judgment, and therefore he never acquires a thorough knowledge of anything, for knowledge and efficiency are not gained without industry, thought and practice. How can a person even learn a trade or business thoroughly, unless he is industrious and persevering? Perhaps he attains to a superficial general knowledge of things, in order to better enjoy life, but he is anxious for enjoyment, not for the solid instruction; he is incapable of appreciating true, permanent happiness, and does nothing likely to promote it, but everything calculated to destroy it. In the homes of reckless men, such as I have been describing, disorder, discontent, poverty and want often prevail. Many a man makes speeches about reforms in the government and the condition of the working classes, but he does nothing at all towards reforming his own household, or adding to the family income by displaying more industry and self-denial. Many a youth is persuaded to join the ranks of the socialists, and contributes liberally out of his wages to their funds, whilst his parents are actually in want. Some live on from day to day, either doing no work at all, or spending their earnings on drink; they let the future take care of itself. Thoughtlessness has

brought thousands of young men to ruin, so that they have become a burden on society. Perhaps, when it is too late, they see that youth ought to be, not a time for sowing wild oats, but a time of preparation for the serious business of life. Young men, who can barely support themselves, often rush into matrimony, and, as soon as the first child is born they are reduced to beggary. We see persons, devoid of all necessary training and experience, trying to set up a business, and plunging themselves and their families into debt and misery. It is impossible to give an adequate description of the wretchedness that a reckless individual brings upon himself and others. He loses the esteem of all about him, and meets with nothing but trouble. Worse still is the plight of one who, by his reckless words, has induced even others to do wrong, and has robbed them of honor and reputation. A reckless mode of life often leads to the loss of a man's good name, health and happiness, and his misery involves that of his wife and children. Those who habitually live a reckless life become a plague to the whole community.

What prospect of future happiness do such people possess? Since they are deficient in serious industry and common sense they know practically nothing about the way of salvation and the doctrines of faith. They are too careless, and too idle, to care for their temporal interests, on which their earthly prosperity depends, but still less do they trouble about their immortal souls and their ultimate salvation. Their hold upon the truths of religion is inevitably weak, and consequently they have no firm convictions. Their disinclination to think things out thoroughly makes them sway to and fro, ready to be misled by every false teacher who comes their way. They are apt to be influenced by illogical arguments, and, as St. Paul says, to be carried about with every wind of doctrine. An unbeliever has no difficulty in persuading such people that the truths of religion are merely human inventions, which an enlightened person is bound to set aside; and, as they have no real convictions, they are easily induced to believe that virtue and the fear of God are things that should be dispensed with. They accept every infidel suggestion indiscriminately, and end by thinking it a mark of mental weakness to feel reverence and trust in God, to love parents and children. Nothing is easier than to lead a frivolous, reckless man into every kind of folly, sin and crime. His ideas of right and wrong, of good and evil, are so confused that

his balance is quickly overthrown, and from evil thoughts he easily proceeds to evil deeds. It is only necessary to represent vice as something pleasant and attractive, to declare all that good people say against it to be absurd nonsense, and forthwith he will abandon himself to it, until finally there is no folly, no sin, of which he is not capable. All efforts to make him realize his errors and to recall him to the way of justice and virtue will usually fail.

It is useless to speak to a frivolous and thoughtless person of God's omnipotence, mercy and justice, or of the atonement effected by Christ; it is a waste of time to reproach him with his ingratitude to God for the countless benefits received at His hands, or to remind him that he will have to give an account, at an hour when he least expects it, of all his actions; it is vain to implore him to amend his way of life and to seek after those things that tend to peace. As St. Paul says, "the sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand" (1 Cor. ii, 14). He behaves like Felix, the governor, who, when St. Paul spoke of justice, chastity and the judgment to come, said: "For this time go thy way; but when I have a convenient time I will send for thee" (Acts xxiv, 25). Such truths make no impression upon the frivolous, and even if they did, it would soon be obliterated by worldly amusements.

At times, however, even the most frivolous people are depressed, for misfortunes compel them to reflect, and the consequences of sin draw their attention to the sin itself. At these moments they feel a desire to be good and to pray, but they cannot; they long for release from their misery, but they are in bondage to sin, and with sorrow they realize that they are no longer free. Yet their sorrow does not last, and leads to nothing, for it is soon stifled by worldly amusements. To such people we may apply the words of St. James: "If a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was" (James i, 23, 24).

A reckless and frivolous man not only pays no attention to God and His Commandments, he does not merely neglect his own soul, but he mocks at those who value their faith and try to lead a good life. By his frivolous words he often undermines the religious convictions and dispositions of others, and his bad example promotes the evil induced by his suggestive remarks. The young, who

have no experience, and the old, who already have one foot in the grave, are often equally indifferent to the things that are of real importance in life; they never give a thought to the salvation of their immortal souls; they even drag others with them to destruction.

I have shown you the dangerous and deadly results of recklessness, and have pointed out how they affect our bodies and souls, our families and our country, our present and future life. How can the conditions of life be improved, unless we improve ourselves and put aside our frivolity, recklessness and want of thought, striving rather to bring order into our lives, according to the laws of reason and of Divine revelation, which is able to make those happy who believe in it?

It behooves us to be in earnest and to make a wise use of our time. This life is a preparation for eternity, and what we sow here we shall reap hereafter; our wages will be precisely what we have earned. Pay attention therefore to St. Paul's admonition: "This then I say and testify in the Lord, that henceforward you walk, not as also the gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts (Ephes. iv, 17,18). Follow the advice of the same Apostle, when he says: "See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God" (Ephes. v, 15-17).

Yes, my brethren, let us no longer walk as unwise,—as foolish children snatching at everything that can afford them enjoyment, but let us walk as wise and reasonable people who consider beforehand what they ought to desire, to say, or to do. When the advocates of this or that way of thinking try to win you over to their views, test their doctrines and principles, compare them with those of Christianity, and I have no fear of your being led astray. Do not be influenced too much by outward appearances, nor by the allurements of the world, nor by the feelings of your own weak and foolish hearts, nor by the suggestions of others; but take as your guide the law of God and the voice of conscience, and you will not be at a loss how to act. All who have ever won the respect of their fellow-creatures by their learning, skill, generosity, courage or active charity, have done so because they were in earnest,

and worked with industry, discretion and perseverance. No one secures a comfortable income by frivolity, fickleness, indolence or love of pleasure, but by industry and prudence. The saints did not enter into the joy of their Lord for the reason that they were frivolous, deaf to the voice of conscience and the precepts of the Gospel, and eager to indulge in every amusement that came in their way;—no, they took pains to grow in the knowledge of Christ and His holy law; they crucified the flesh with its desires and lusts, they despised the world and its pleasures, in order to win Christ. They were not guided by the false principles and bad example of the children of this world, but followed Him, who is the way, the truth and the life. Let us act as they did, not yielding to every whim and fancy, but clinging firmly to the principles laid down by our Divine Lord. Without good principles no one can persevere in well-doing and resist evil, and a man who drifts along thoughtlessly, without any order and method of life, is carried away by every impulse of passion, and yields to every temptation. But one who directs all his thoughts and actions in accordance with the will of God, will never go astray; he will stand firm, where others stumble; and he will enjoy the peace and happiness that others seek in vain. He will contribute to the welfare of society and will finally obtain the reward promised to those who have fought the good fight and kept the faith. Let me conclude with St. Paul's words: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv, 58). Amen.

II. UNBELIEF

“Now the Spirit manifestly saith that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy and having their conscience seared.”—1 Tim. iv, 1, 2.

We saw in our last discourse that the chief source of most of the evils prevalent in our midst is a spirit of recklessness or frivolity, which prevents men from listening to the voice of God and conscience, so that they fail to regulate their thoughts and actions according to God’s will. Most of the aberrations and excesses of the age are due to this cause. If we are alienated from the life of God” (Ephes. iv, 18); if we avoid God and fix our thoughts on the vain things of earth; if we cling to creatures and forget the Creator; if, instead of busying ourselves with the truths and means of salvation, we turn our attention to profane and dangerous subjects; if we think only of present enjoyment and care nothing for our immortal souls,—then the consciousness of being destined by God for a higher and everlasting life will gradually fade away. We shall forget our relation to Almighty God, and regard ourselves as citizens of this world only. We shall no longer think of our life here as a pilgrimage through a land of exile; heaven will cease to be, in our eyes, our true home, which we must enter through the portal of death. We shall speak of this world in language resembling that of St. Peter in to-day’s Gospel, who exclaimed on seeing our Saviour transfigured in glory: “Master, it is good to be here. Let us make tabernacles in this place” (Luke ix, 33).

If once we lose sight of our real condition, our hopes and aspirations will become confused, our faith will perish, and all our thoughts and desires will be fixed upon what is visible and temporal. Then, having fallen away from God, and having shut our eyes to our eternal destiny, we shall imagine ourselves to be lords of creation, owing obedience to none, and we shall aim only at earthly possessions, and seek honor in the esteem of men, and happiness in the gratification of our passions.

These are the evil results of frivolity, which is like a poisonous well, contaminating all that it touches. The first and most fatal result is *unbelief*, which is the subject that I have selected for to-day’s sermon.

I. In the New Testament a time is foretold when the Kingdom

of God is to be threatened with inward and outward perils, and with oppression and conflicts of every kind. It is to suffer grievously, and the temptation will be so great that, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived (Matth. xxiv, 24). Iniquity will abound and the charity of many shall grow cold (*ibid.* v, 12). At that time, as St. Peter tells us, "there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Peter iii, 3), and, as St. Paul says, men "will not endure sound doctrine; but according to their own desires they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth and will be turned to fables" (2 Tim. iv, 3, 4).

If we consider our own age, and the mode of life common at the present day, we shall be inclined to think that these prophecies are now being fulfilled. Socialism is rapidly gaining ground, and it aims at uprooting all faith in God, in the immortality of the soul and in a future life; in fact it seeks to destroy Christianity and everything connected with it, and to substitute for the ten Commandments given us by God the one principle: "Enjoy whatever you can enjoy, for everything ends at death." No one who seriously considers the age in which we live, and its characteristics, can deny that there are in our midst many deceitful scoffers, who despise the truth, and also many who will not endure sound doctrine, and listen to teachers inspired by the devil.

Everywhere, in every class of society, we meet people who believe nothing themselves, and are doing their utmost to destroy the faith in others. The number of those engaged in spreading infidelity is so great that we may fearlessly assert that Christianity never employed so many agents to build up the city of God as are now busied about its overthrow. Centuries ago crusades were undertaken for the purpose of rescuing from the infidels the Holy Land, where our Redeemer has gone up and down teaching, and where by His passion and death He made atonement for the sins of the world. But now a campaign is being carried on against the Cross, against the faith in a crucified Redeemer, and efforts of every conceivable kind are made to inspire believers with the spirit of infidelity. Sometimes the very existence of God is denied; sometimes the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is rejected, and He is placed on a level with merely human teachers; sometimes His miracles are called in question; sometimes the Church is described as an obsolete institution, designed to promote ignorance and super-

stition, and to torture the conscience of men; sometimes the most solemn and profound mysteries of religion are ridiculed, because they are incomprehensible and beyond human understanding; sometimes the ceremonies of the Church and the practices of religion are condemned as being nothing but meaningless formalities; sometimes the immortality of the soul is denied, and we are told that death is the end of all things, and that therefore we ought to get as much pleasure as possible out of this life; sometimes we hear that all belief in revelation is wrong, fit only for ignorant people, and that the cultured and educated classes can well dispense with all revealed truths and with the laws of Christianity, because they are guided by the light of reason,—because they believe and do only what pleases them, what does not interfere with their disorderly passions and desires.

Infidelity is inculcated in private conversations and at public assemblies, by books, newspapers and periodicals, so that every class of society may be imbued with the spirit of unbelief. Moreover, the propagators of these views hold out all manner of specious inducements, appealing to the passions of the age. For instance, at the present time they talk much of liberty of conscience, meaning thereby license to sin; they extol equality of rights and of property, freedom from restraint, etc.—things likely to dazzle and mislead superficial minds. This is the line of action pursued by “spirits of error,” who teach the “doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared.” To our sorrow we must confess that they do not labor in vain.

Alas, too many allow themselves to be led astray by these deceitful spirits, and refuse to accept the truth, so that in time their faith dies out and their charity grows cold. There have been unbelievers in every age, but formerly unbelief existed chiefly among the rich and mighty, whilst other classes were unaffected by it, and preserved their faith and fervor. But now the darkness of infidelity has spread in every rank of society, and consequently there is an alarming increase in the adherents of socialism. It has penetrated from the mansions of the wealthy to the middle classes, to the factories and cottages of the laborers. There are, thank God, many places where faith still exists and flourishes, where it is still regarded as the greatest treasure in life; but there are, alas, many places where unbelief abounds, revealing its presence not only in the language, but also in the debased morality of the people.

Divine charity, which is the outcome of faith, has there grown cold, if it has not actually been replaced by hatred of Christ and His Church. Is this accusation against our age not fully justified? Do you not know by experience that there are many who care nothing for the truths of faith and the practice of religion, who maintain that each man's religion is his own private affair, not to be displayed publicly? Do you not know that many have ceased to regard religion as of supreme importance, and subordinate it to temporal advantage? Is not piety growing rare, and do not men transgress God's Commandments with ever-increasing recklessness? Are not Sundays and holidays desecrated by work and by sinful excesses? Where shall we find the steadfast faith, manifesting itself in active charity, such as our forefathers possessed? Is their faith still our guide through life, our support, and our consolation in sorrow? Are there not thousands in whose hearts it no longer exists? Are there still amongst us men like the heroic confessors of old, who endured insult, mockery and persecution, rather than abandon their faith? Where is faith to be found? Not in society, for it is no longer the fashion to profess one's self a pious Christian; the name of God is hardly ever mentioned, religion is ridiculed and has ceased to exert any influence over the family life. Is faith to be found in the hearts of the young? No, for they are in many cases defiled by the seductive arguments and bad example of their elders; the children grow up without ever being taught to pray. Even in our churches faith seems absent in some people if we are to judge by their behavior, and there are few who, like the publican in the parable, strike their breast and say: "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke xviii, 13). Rare indeed is it to find faith in all its beauty, vigor and efficacy; it is more frequently trodden in the dust, hated, slandered and persecuted even by its own children. Religion is no longer regarded as indispensable, and we are told that it does not matter what a man believes, if only he is upright in his dealings. Those who openly profess themselves unbelievers are looked upon as broad-minded. Among non-Catholics, crowds throng to hear preachers who deny the inspiration of the Bible, and speak of it as a collection of writings of merely human authorship, having no higher value than any other ancient compilation. Such preachers inculcate what they call a rational form of Christianity, which has nothing in common with real Christianity, and consists of doctrines pleasing to the ears and flattering to the senses.

Men who boldly reject the truths of faith, and ridicule any public profession of religion, are extolled as the heroic champions of human liberty. Yes, even Catholics have been known to join the ranks of socialism that is threatening to overthrow the entire social order, because they hope thus to win a reputation for broad-mindedness and intelligence.

It almost seems as if our Saviour had the present generation in view when He asked: "The Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (Luke xviii, 8). It seems as if the time had come of which St. Paul was thinking when he said: "The Spirit manifestly saith that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared" (1 Tim. iv, 1, 2).

You wonder, perhaps, why infidelity is so prevalent, and why so many people reject sound doctrine, and are led astray by free-thinkers and atheists. It is not because of any difficulty in proving the doctrines of Christianity to be of Divine origin—they have stood the keenest criticism of scholars in every age—but infidelity is the outcome of pride, which refuses to submit to authority, and of sensuality, which rejects what Christianity teaches of self-denial, mortification, chastity and justice. As a rule infidelity begins in the heart, not in the intellect; it is due to the absence of a good, honest will, and not to any lack of convincing arguments. Truth is ignored as something troublesome and inconvenient; it is not loved, because it is not always easy to declare oneself its champion. Consequently, men cease to believe, because they have not the will to believe, and prefer to listen to those who preach a religion that requires belief only in what one chooses to accept, and that imposes no obligations beyond what each individual is willing to incur.

St. Jude gives an excellent description of unbelievers in the following words: "These men blaspheme whatever things they know not; and what things soever they naturally know, like dumb beasts, in these they are corrupted. . . . These are spots in their banquets, feasting together without fear, feeding themselves, clouds without water which are carried about by winds, trees of the autumn unfruitful, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion, wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever. . . . These are murderers, full of complaints, walking according to their own desires,

and their mouth speaketh proud things, admiring persons for gain's sake."

This passage reveals the unspeakable misery that unbelief inevitably brings upon individuals and society at large. It destroys happiness, by opening the door to sin, and it undermines society by removing its strongest supports, viz., virtue and fear of the Lord.

II. The weakening of a man's sense for truth has the lamentable result that he ceases to be influenced by the teaching of religion; but still more disastrous consequences ensue, if he deliberately embraces error, turns away from the light and silences the voice of conscience. Worst of all is it if he falls into infidelity, for, as a learned man has said, "the surest symptom of an unhealthy condition in a generation is the rejection of truth, rather than the acceptance of error." A man who clings to some error feels at least some need of religion; and one whose conscience is uneasy, knows that he is doing wrong. But one who no longer believes anything has no sense for truth, uprightness or virtue. Unbelief is an inexhaustible source of evil, and has in every age been a poison, affecting human life in all its relations and causing indescribable misery. From it results a state of sinfulness in which a man shrinks from nothing, since he fears nothing, God and conscience having been set aside. His will tends always to evil, and no sense of honor or decency deters him from gratifying his desires; he sins without realizing what he does, and without scruple.

This may seem a harsh opinion, but it is not unfair. What power is there able to keep a man from sinning, when he has no belief in a just and omniscient God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a judgment to come? Will his reason check him? No, for reason may err, and may even become the slave of passion. "I know," says St. Paul, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good, which I will, I do not; but the evil, which I will not, that I do" (Rom. vii, 18, 19). Can his conscience restrain him from wrong-doing? No, for it is unhappily often silenced by disorderly desires, and if it comes into conflict with worldly interests, its warnings and threats fall on deaf ears. Is a sense of honor capable of guarding man from sin and the shame attached to it? No, for in proportion as the passions increase in violence and man yields to sin, so do his nobler instincts vanish and cease to influence his actions. Human

laws and public opinion are of no avail in making a man refrain from excesses, injustice, sin and vice. The cleverer men are, the better do they know how to evade the restrictions imposed by law. Where there is no thought of a Judge, who searcheth the heart, or of a general judgment, when the thoughts, words and works of all mankind will be weighed impartially in the balance, or of a life beyond the grave, when every man will be rewarded according to his works,—where all these are forgotten, then it is a waste of time to look for justice among men, for the best laws cease to have any force. In a word,—by robbing a man of his faith, you open the door to sin and injustice of every kind, and deprive him of all motive and strength to do right, and of all consolation in times of suffering and adversity.

If a man has no faith, whence can he derive courage to resist the temptations of this life, or patience to endure pain and sorrow, or submission, peace of mind and composure under all circumstances, or humility and self-denial, and every other virtue? His faith teaches him that the path of suffering is also that of glory, and that our heavenly Father enables us to will and to perform all good works; that He is unchanging in His wisdom and love; that without His consent not a hair can fall from our heads; that all the thoughts, desires and needs of our hearts are known to Him, and that He disposes everything for our good. Whence shall the poor find comfort in their labor and distress if they have no faith in Jesus, who Himself had not where to lay His head, and who said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matth. v, 3)? What consolation is there for the sick, the persecuted and the despised, if they have no faith in Jesus Christ, who bore His heavy Cross for us, and drained the cup of suffering to the dregs, and promised the joys of heaven to those who should bear their crosses after Him with patience and resignation, and endure persecution for justice's sake? What hope is there for a desolate widow, or for orphan children, left alone in this unkind world, if they do not believe in our heavenly Father, who feeds the young ravens, if they cry to Him, and clothes the flowers of the field, and cannot possibly forsake those who are of more value than birds and flowers? Surely the downtrodden and unfortunate, whose best endeavors are unsuccessful whilst the wicked prosper and live in luxury, would despair, unless they were upheld by their belief in God's justice and a future reward. Faith alone makes men really

just and good, and thus it is the foundation and support of all peace and happiness in this world; it restrains and checks pride and the disorderly desires that are the chief sources of all the evils afflicting mankind, and it implants in men's hearts all the qualities that make for peace, viz., humility, charity, gentleness and patience. It secures to each his property, his honor and all that is advantageous to him. Faith renders men truthful in speech, honest in business and faithful to their promises, whilst it guards them from envy, malice and all uncharitableness,—in a word, from all sin. What a happy place the earth would be if every one acted according to the precepts of the Gospel. Each would be contented with his position and with the circumstances assigned him by Providence, and so he would feel neither discontent nor envy. The poor man would bear his lot with patience, and the rich would not be proud or disdainful. Those in authority would show mercy and justice, and the working classes would be industrious, peaceable and happy. There would be no jealousy, no disputes, no tricks or deception in trade, no evil speaking, but each would seek what is to the advantage of his neighbor, as well as himself, and all would walk in justice, purity of heart, and sanctity, worthily of their high calling, and rejoicing that their labor was not vain in the sight of God. "This is," as St. John says, "the victory which overcometh the world, our faith" (1 John v, 4).

The reason why human society is now so far removed from this happy condition, is that faith has grown cold, and religion has ceased to govern men's thoughts and actions. Infidelity infects mankind, and where it prevails, no health remains. It is the source of disorder, discontent, rebellion, insecurity, attacks on the person, honor and property of others, pride, envy, ambition and lust; it is like a mighty torrent threatening to overwhelm all orderly existence.

The socialists aim at depriving men of all faith in an almighty, good, wise, holy and just God, who rewards the good and punishes the evil, and if they succeed, they will have torn down the supports on which all social order rests. Men will cease to concern themselves about their neighbor's welfare, and will consider only how to procure the greatest amount of enjoyment for themselves. They will cherish ill-will and hatred against those who can afford luxuries, and, being desirous to obtain them by some easy method, not by honest hard work, they will have recourse to trickery, theft

and murder. If a man does not believe in God, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Redeemer, in the immortality of the soul and in life eternal, he will act according to the suggestion of his evil passions, and will not scruple to sin. Should mankind in general act in this way, a state with the best possible form of government would not be habitable for reasonable, moral beings, but would be the abode of savage monsters.

St. Paul has given us a terrible but true description of the condition of men who have no faith. He says: "Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God, having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii, 2-5).

That a society made up of such individuals cannot be happy, and must sooner or later perish, is self-evident. Even the heathen recognized this fact, and made faith in the gods the foundation of their constitution. History shows that those nations have grown great and prosperous in which religion, virtue and fear of the Lord have flourished. But where faith has ceased to leaven domestic and public life, all those virtues have disappeared on which depends the happiness both of individuals and of society. We have all heard of the horrors of the French Revolution; they were the lamentable outcome of the infidelity then rife among the people. Where God is forgotten and unbelief prevails, immorality, injustice, cruelty and violence will soon appear openly. As we read in Holy Scripture "Justice exalteth a nation, but sin maketh nations miserable" (Prov. xiv, 34). Experience proves the truth of these words. For years false prophets have been sowing the seed of unbelief and indifference to the teaching of Christianity, and now it is bringing forth fruit, and we have in our midst much discontent and many divisions; workmen are on bad terms with their employers, injustice and deceit are common in business, and all who love their country must inevitably watch with apprehension the growth of these and similar evils.

I need scarcely point out that an infidel has no hope for the life to come. Our Saviour said: "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii, 3). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi, 16). "He that believeth in the Son of God is not judged; but he that doth not believe is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John iii, 18).

Therefore, I implore you, my brethren; listen not to the false prophets, the enemies of our faith. "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. Be ye not partakers with them. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light; for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth" (Ephes. v, 6-9). As you would flee from fire, so should you avoid men whose tongues are like flames devouring your faith, your most precious possession. You are careful to keep aloof from a person with a contagious disease; be equally careful not to come into contact with the emissaries of the devil, whose deceitful words might destroy the life of your souls and plunge you into ruin. What is more valuable than eyesight? Yet these people deliberately try to destroy your sight and lead you into darkness. Cherish with jealous care the faith of your fathers! Cling to it, for the way of faith is also the way of life, on which you will find forgiveness of sins, strength to persevere in what is good, help in distress, counsel in difficulty, comfort in affliction, peace amidst all trials, and, finally, the salvation of your immortal souls. Do not be contented with merely preserving your faith, but strive to learn its truths more and more perfectly, that it may grow stronger and be a living faith, manifested in a truly Christian way of life. Order all your actions in accordance with the teaching of this faith; shun the works of darkness and everything opposed to the claims of religion; keep your conscience clear, that you may have no reason to fear the chastisement with which the ungodly are threatened, but may look forward with confidence to the rewards promised to the righteous. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matth. v, 16). "Every one that shall confess me before men," says our Saviour, "I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven" (Matth. x, 32). If you conscientiously keep the Commandments, you will, by God's grace, be so thoroughly convinced of the truth and happiness of faith, that all the crafty designs and allurements of the enemies of religion will be powerless to move you, and will never cause you to fall into infidelity. Christ

said: "If any man will do the will of Him that sent me, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii, 17).

I have now pointed out to you the bitter fruits of unbelief; it remains for each of you to do his utmost to prevent this evil from spreading amongst us. It is above all the sacred duty of Christian parents to watch carefully over their children, for the teachers of infidelity aim particularly at leading the young astray. Never allow your sons and daughters to neglect their religious duties, or to associate with immoral and irreligious persons. Do not shrink from remonstrating with them seriously, if you detect in them any tendency to indifference towards religion, and, above all, set them a good example by yourselves leading a pious, God-fearing life and doing your duty as Christians.

Let no one be satisfied with possessing faith himself, and disregard the welfare of others. Do your best to secure the priceless gift of faith to all your relatives and dependents, so that none may rob them of their crown. May the kingdom of God increase in and around you, and may you all be firmly established in Jesus Christ our Lord, the Author and Finisher of faith. Amen.

III. DISOBEDIENCE

"Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake . . . for so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."—I Peter ii, 13, 15.

Some years ago there was an outbreak of cholera in a certain town, and the government cautioned the people against eating raw fruit, since experience showed that those who did so usually contracted the disease. Every sensible person will admit that this was a wise regulation, but some of the people in the town considered this warning an interference with their personal liberty. One man, in order to win the applause of the people, proceeded to eat publicly a quantity of raw fruit, washing it down with cold water, and almost immediately after he was seized with the disease, and died of it. This man exemplifies the view held by many at the present day, and his terrible punishment will be duplicated, though in another form, both in the case of individuals and in that of society as a whole, if respect, reverence and obedience to authority disappear, and every person claims the right to act as he pleases. The prosperity, peace and security of mankind depend upon obedience to authority in family, Church and State. I know that nowadays the authority of these three institutions is constantly called in question, and that any one upholding it is liable to criticism, but this fact shall not deter me from giving utterance to the truth, and from trying to show you that *disobedience to authority* is opposed (1) to the needs of mankind, and (2) to God's order.

I. Wherever we go, we hear a great deal about liberty; and many would not be sorry if all mention of obedience were removed from our laws, both Divine and civil. Man is indeed free; he can determine his own actions, and choose between good and evil; he can decide to do one thing and refrain from doing another. But he has unruly inclinations, desires and passions, which are often so strong as to overpower his free will. Reason bids him do good and not evil, but reason is often in error, and even when her judgment is right, she is apt to be dominated by desires and passions, and a man does what he knows to be wrong.

We read in the Book of Wisdom (ix, 15) that "the corruptible

body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." St. Paul, too, says: "I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do" (Rom. vii, 15).

In his sober moments the drunkard perceives that he is ruining his health, wasting his substance and bringing misery upon his family, but nevertheless he cannot abstain from drink. Sometimes a tradesman discovers a way of making money by fraud. His reason tells him that he ought not to do it, but his covetousness overpowers the voice of reason, and he acts in the wrongful manner to promote his worldly advantage. It would be easy to multiply similar instances, for men are prone to be dominated by their passions, which carry them away and implicate them in irrational and perilous courses. What is the consequence? Must there not be a law that restricts their freedom and that controls men's unruly appetites and passions for the benefit both of the individual and of society, and must it not be a punishable offense to transgress this law? Where shall we discover the law and its guardian? A Christian will not be at a loss, but will reply at once: "God is the supreme lawgiver, and He makes His will known through revelation and through the human conscience; He has appointed rulers to safeguard His laws and see that they are observed." Unbelievers, however, deny all this, and consider conscience to be the sole rule of action. Let us put ourselves for a moment at their point of view, and see where it leads.

Conscience undoubtedly exercises a controlling force over a man, stimulating him to do good and warning him against evil; it commends him when he does right, and upbraids him when he does wrong; it admonishes, approves, rewards, condemns and punishes him. Every one claims liberty to follow the dictates of conscience, and pleads its bidding in justification for his actions. On conscience ultimately depend the sanctity of marriage and of oaths, respect for parents, fair dealing in business, security of ownership, obedience on the part of subordinates—in short all the relations of life. But although conscience tells us how we ought to act, its decision is by no means invariably right, nor can it always enforce its decrees; moreover, men do not, as a rule, habitually act in accordance with their conscience. Sometimes the consciences of different people do not agree; and men often abuse their liberty for the purpose of deceiving, or misleading others, and they commit many

sins whereby they injure their neighbors' honor and property. Yet conscience is powerless to check them, though it may raise its voice in protest. Frequently, too, is conscience asleep, and a man sins without being aware of any remonstrance; his dealings with others are characterized by selfishness, and wounded pride often impels him to disparage his neighbors, while, blinded by passion, he deludes himself with the thought that he is only asserting his own rights, when he tramples on those of others.

Such being the case, how could conscience ever be the sole counsellor directing our actions? We require another lawgiver and ruler, able to control our passions and prevent them from harming society; and if this lawgiver does not reside within us, there must be some authority external to ourselves. No one doubts that parents naturally possess authority over their children, whose duty it is to obey them. But what supreme authority is there over mankind in general? It can not be in the hands of men like ourselves, in fact, unless we accept Christian principles, we shall refuse to admit that any one in the world has a right to impose laws upon us, for one man is as good as another, and all possess equal dignity and equal rights. This is the teaching of the socialists. Now think on the one hand of man, with his reason subject to error and deception, with his conscience either enslaved or distorted, and with all his passions and evil tendencies; think on the other hand of sin, as the only force dominating mankind, and you will see that the inevitable consequence will be war, war waged by every individual against all others—a conflict of pride, avarice, ambition, lust and all the passions—and then nothing will save society from destruction, because each man will appeal to his own reason, conscience and liberty, and will refuse to yield to and obey others.

Human society will at last fall a prey to all these intolerable evils if men despise and ignore God's institutions, and if the superman claims an absolute right to govern himself, thus usurping the rights of God, our supreme Lord and Lawgiver, and of His Incarnate Son, in whom we believe. If liberty of conscience, as it is called, were to take the place of all law, each individual would be free to injure another, and would claim the right to punish wrongdoers, since there would be no visible authority charged with the protection of innocence and the chastisement of vice.

According to these theories, even the human laws have no firm basis, no weight and no higher sanction; they are devised by men

for themselves, and are binding only to the extent that each individual allows. If he can evade them, or use them as a cloak for injustice, so much the better for him; there is no judge to whom he is answerable. Conscience can not be invoked in support of the law, for conscientiousness can not exist where there is no fear of God, and no belief in future retribution. When his own personal advantage, pride and self-indulgence are concerned, man disregards law, and acts as he chooses, and thus the peace and happiness both of individuals and of society as a whole are constantly endangered.

Nothing but the teaching of Christianity on the subject of authority can guard us from all these evils, and permanently ensure the safety and prosperity of our country.

II. Christianity tells us that God is our supreme Lawgiver, and that His will should regulate all our actions. This will is made known to us through the voice of conscience and by means of revelation, and it affects the well-being of the family, the Church and the State, these three indispensable supports of the social order. Christianity regards marriage as instituted by God, and as indissoluble by man; married people are required to care for their children and dependents; children are ordered to treat their parents with affection, respect and obedience, and servants are called upon to be faithful, obedient and industrious. Christianity declares the Church to have been founded by God for the good of mankind, and her members owe her obedience. Our Saviour said to His disciples: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke x, 16). Christianity bids us regard the secular government as God's servant and representative. On this topic St. Paul writes: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. For princes are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear; for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil. Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake" (Rom. xiii, 1-5). The Apostle lays down

clearly in this passage the principles inculcated by Christianity on the subject of secular government and the obedience due to it. He insists that every existing form of government was instituted by God for the benefit of men and for the maintenance of peace, order and harmony, to restrain the evil passion of men and punish the transgressors of the law. Everyone is bound to submit to the governing power of the State, not only to avoid punishment, but as a matter of conscience, because to obey is a duty laid upon us all by God. You see therefore that Christianity confers upon the government a dignity and an authority which it would never have in virtue of a compact made by men; its claim to our respect and obedience is so strong and universal, that no one can disregard it without at the same time failing in the reverence and obedience due to God, and incurring the punishment imposed on all who despise His Commandments. "He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation."

The Gospel teaches us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but it also requires rulers to treat their subjects justly. A ruler ought to display justice, moderation and love in his dealings with his people; he is God's representative, and is bound therefore to govern, as God governs, so as to promote the happiness and prosperity of the nation committed to his care. God's wrath will light upon all rulers who oppress and enslave their subjects, waste the revenues of their country and the money earned by the labor of the poor, and use their high position as a cloak for malice and wickedness. Such rulers are influenced by their fancies and passions, and display no justice, impartiality or charity in their actions. "Hear, therefore, ye kings, and understand; learn, ye that are judges of the ends of the earth. Give ear, you that rule the people, and that please yourselves in multitudes of nations; for power is given you by the Lord, and strength by the Most High, who will examine your works and search out your thoughts. Because, being ministers of His Kingdom, you have not judged rightly, nor kept the law of justice, nor walked according to the will of God, horribly and speedily will He appear to you, for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule. For to him that is little, mercy is granted, but the mighty shall be mightily tormented. For God will not except any man's person, neither will He stand in awe of any man's greatness; for He made the little and the great, and

He hath equally care of all; but a greater punishment is ready for the more mighty" (Wisd. vi, 2-9).

Thus both rulers and ruled are protected by the doctrines of Christianity. They should be united by a bond of love, and vie with one another in promoting their mutual happiness and the prosperity of their country. Of course instances occur of corruption in the ruling class, so that it abuses its power and arbitrarily oppresses the people, even tampering with their faith, their most sacred inheritance. How does it behove us to act in such a case? Ought we to rebel, to refuse obedience and to raise the standard of revolt? No; such action would be unworthy of Christians; we are entitled to express our opinions freely to the government, but, having done so, we should endure with patience and pray, knowing that God in His wisdom and power is able to bring about another better state of affairs, if it be His will.

When St. Paul wrote the words that I have just read to you, the Jews were dissatisfied with the Roman government, and had rebelled against it, but the Apostle did not sanction their rebellion, and impressed upon the Christians in Rome the principles by which they ought to be guided with regard to authority. At the time when the books of the New Testament were being written, the secular government was as bad as it could possibly be, and the profession of Christianity was enough to cost a man his life; nevertheless the New Testament contains no instigation to revolt, nor do we read that the Christians refused to obey the tyrannical rulers of the pagan empire. They did indeed remonstrate respectfully, but when no attention was paid to their words, and efforts were made to force them to deny their faith and sacrifice to false gods, they only said: "We ought to obey God rather than men," and preferred to endure horrible tortures and an agonizing death, rather than be false to their Saviour and His Gospel. In all secular matters, therefore, it is our duty to obey those in authority; only if they order us to do anything contrary to the teaching and principles of our faith, we must not obey, for in that case obedience would be sinful; "we ought to obey God rather than men."

Such are the Christian principles regarding the relation that should exist between rulers and ruled. Would not society be more settled and peaceful, if these principles were universally recognized and respected? Wherever history records that princes and peoples have adhered to them, there has been prosperity, order and dis-

cipline; rebellions have been unknown and the rights of property have been upheld. Princes have ruled with justice and mercy, and their subjects have obeyed them from a sense of duty.

No reasonable, impartial observer can deny that our faith, the one, true, ancient faith of Christianity, is the sole safeguard of the happiness and welfare of nations. This faith affords a firm foundation to society; it corrects all errors and removes all doubts; it regulates all disorderly desires and passions, and holds them in check; it directs the human conscience and enforces its decisions; it upholds parental authority and teaches that the secular government is no mere tyrannical force, but an ordinance of God, entitled as such to make laws and to punish wrongdoers. Those who attempt to rob mankind of their faith, are actually destroying the foundations of all order. Nowadays atheists and socialists have lost all belief in God and His government of the universe, they have no faith in revelation or in any future life, consequently their one aim is to enjoy their present existence, and they shrink from no means towards attaining this end. The poor are antagonistic to the rich, the miserable to the successful, and no one is at peace, no one's tranquility is assured. If conscience has ceased to be the voice of God, admonishing us to remember our responsibilities, it is nothing but a pre-conceived opinion, and a man will be guided by it only as long as its decisions do not clash with his own advantage, interests and passions. Then an oath will no longer be binding, there will be no safeguard for any man's honor or property, and the law will lose all its weight and force. If you reject Divine revelation and the authority of the Church, and declare reason, left without guidance, to be the sole source of truth and justice, you will plunge into a maze of erroneous opinions, doubts and false claims, until at last the words truth and justice will convey no meaning to you, and you will be bewildered by innumerable conflicting theories. If you say that man is autonomous, and that it is beneath his dignity for him to obey another, no one's person, life, reputation or goods will be safe; children will rebel against their parents, students against their teachers, servants against their masters, and all social order will perish. In a word, as soon as you assert that there is no God, no Divine revelation that men are bound to accept, no immortality, no judgment and no eternity of bliss or misery, you have actually declared war upon all existing authority and all law; you have taken away from all the

relations of life their validity and justification, and eventually all our social order will fall into ruins.

Let me sum up shortly what I have been saying: We are human beings whose minds are liable to error and deception, whose consciences may be silenced, whose hearts are full of unruly desires and passions, whose wills are prone to evil—therefore there must be some visible authority to preserve order, to restrain our passions, to direct our wills and to punish wrongdoers. Infidel doctrines and principles regarding authority are opposed to the nature of man and the ordinance of God, and, instead of promoting the happiness and prosperity of society, tend inevitably to its overthrow, whereas the teaching of Christianity is not only adapted to all circumstances of human life, but affords the strongest guarantee for the welfare both of the individual and of the State. Hence we are led to the conclusion that reason and conscience both constrain us to submit to the rules laid down by religion, and to be subject to authority, in family life, in the Church and in the State.

In the words of St. Paul I exhort you: "Bear not the yoke with unbelievers, for what participation hath justice with injustice? or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi, 14, 15). The doctrines taught by infidels on the subject of authority lead, not to liberty, but to bondage, the shameful bondage of sin; for "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John viii, 34). They produce confusion and disorder, not peace and harmony; they promote, not the welfare of nations, but the decay of all morality, learning, trade and intercourse, and destroy all ownership and earthly prosperity. If the consideration of the fatal results of infidelity fails to inspire you with horror, look at the teachers of these doctrines—"by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. vii, 16). They talk much of liberty, yet they are the slaves of their own evil passions, in a bondage more harsh and shameful than any to which even a most overbearing government could subject them, for their fetters eat into their very flesh, destroying all their health and happiness. They profess a desire for autonomy, yet they blindly follow every agitator who flatters their pride, greed and ambition, and knows how to play upon their feelings. They say that they will not be kept in leading-strings, yet they put faith in every scurrilous newspaper, full of blasphemous falsehoods regarding religion and the religious life, and of slanderous statements regarding their fellow creatures.

They preach peace and independence for all, and yet they persecute unmercifully any who dare to contradict them, or to hold an opinion opposed to their own. They call upon the masses to rid themselves of an unpopular government, intending to grasp the reins of office as soon as those who now hold them have been driven out. Experience shows that there is no more oppressive and unendurable form of tyranny than that which the so-called Apostles of Freedom would fain exercise.

We may apply to them our Saviour's warning: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. vii, 15). Bear not the yoke with such as these, but submit rather to the easy yoke of Jesus Christ, wherein alone true freedom is to be found; "If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John viii, 36). Let us submit always to God's ordinances, for He is our Creator, our Lord, our King and our supreme Lawgiver, who makes His will known unto us through our own conscience and His Commandments, and who has instituted holy Church to be the interpreter to us of His will, and has appointed those in authority over us to be His ministers. If parents take His holy will as their rule of life, morality, peace and happiness will prevail in every home; if children act in accordance with this will, they will honor their father and mother, and live long and happily on earth, whilst their parents will no longer have cause to complain of disobedience, ingratitude and want of affection on the part of their children, and will not be forsaken by them in old age. If masters and servants think of God's holy will, the former will be just and merciful, and the latter contented, industrious and faithful. If subjects remember that it is God's will that they should obey those in authority, the peace of society will be undisturbed, and the prosperity of all classes will be promoted. Whatever our circumstances may be, let us act in conformity with this Divine will, and then we shall be happy both in this life and in eternity. Amen.

IV. SELFISHNESS AND THE LOVE OF MONEY

“Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have; for He hath said: I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee.”—Hebr. xiii, 5.

When Noe’s descendants dispersed after the deluge, the children of Sem settled in a plain in the land of Sennaar, and they said to one another: “Come, let us make a city and a tower, the top whereof may reach to heaven, and let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad in all lands.” But the Lord saw the city and the tower that they were building, and said: “Behold, it is one people, and all have one tongue, and they have begun to do this, neither will they leave off from their designs, till they accomplish them in deed. Come ye therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands, and they ceased to build the city; and therefore the name thereof was called Babel, *i. e.*, confusion (Gen. xi, 4-11).

This story is a type of the state of affairs at the present time. Men have fallen away from the one true faith, and the Gospel has ceased to be regarded as the guide of their life and the source of salvation; and consequently a sense of discontent and a foreboding of impending misfortune weigh them down, and they devise means of averting disaster and of securing peace and happiness. Yet they fare like the children of Adam, who wanted to build a tower that they might always keep in sight, and thus avoid being scattered; the Lord confounds their tongue, and not only do their opinions as to the means of securing happiness differ very widely, but all their efforts are without result, since they do not proceed from the source whence alone flow streams of living water, that is to say, from faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in whom alone we find salvation.

We have seen that the happiness neither of individuals nor of society can be promoted by disobedience to authority and general freedom from restraint. We have still to discuss selfishness, ambition and love of amusement, other faults characteristic of our age, and we shall find that they are equally incapable of leading to true happiness. To-day let us consider selfishness, its consequences and the means of curing it.

I. If a man no longer believes that he will be judged after death, and live for ever in bliss or in misery, or if his belief is too weak to exert much influence over him, he will certainly try to derive as much happiness as possible from this present existence, and his first idea will be to aim at acquiring riches. As soon as the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, the most holy and perfect Being, ceases to be his God and the goal of his life, Mammon, *i. e.*, earthly wealth, will become the object of all his endeavors, and the master whom he serves. Hence St. Paul calls such a man an idolator.

The desire to make money is not in itself sinful or reprehensible; in fact we are impelled to do so by the instinct of self-preservation and by the sense that it is our duty to provide for others. There are many passages in Holy Scripture encouraging us to industry, and we are told that he who is too lazy to work, is unworthy to live. Moreover, we are taught to use carefully what we earn by our industry. "Remember poverty in the time of abundance, and the necessities of poverty in the day of riches" (Eccles. xviii, 25).

It often happens, however, that a man's selfishness urges him to go too far, and he wishes for earthly possessions, not in order to use them properly, but simply for their own sake and because they further his own selfish aims. He does not think of spending his money according to the dictates of reason and Christianity, or of discharging his obligations to his friends and relatives, but his one idea is to become rich and powerful, and to be in a position to gratify all the desires of his selfish and covetous heart.

I think this is one of the chief faults of our age; it is certainly more common now than it has ever been before, and it gives rise to many abuses and to many legitimate complaints. I need scarcely point out to you how universal is the desire to make money and to acquire property. It is a fault common to people of every age. The young are dazzled by the glamor of worldly possessions; their elders are unwearied in their efforts to get rich and to add to what they already have, whilst even the old still cling to their riches, and delight in the sense of ownership, long after they are unable to enjoy them. Different people have different ideas of happiness. Those in a high social position wish for more money in order to live in a style in keeping with their rank. They never say: "I have enough," but plan and labor to increase their wealth. Those of lower rank regard money as a means of pushing themselves forward, and of getting more influence and power, and they exert

themselves to the utmost in order to attain this end. The poor are particularly eager to acquire worldly possessions, and regard the lack of them as a very great misfortune. They look with envy and ill-will at those who are better off, and think that happiness is impossible unless they can be rich.

If we think of the feelings predominant among men, we shall find that they all lead to a desire for money. A lover of luxury wants to be rich, that he may satisfy all the fancies of his self-indulgent nature. A lazy man wants to be rich, that he may live in comfort without exerting himself. An ambitious man wants to be rich, that he may rise to a higher position. A debauchee wants to be rich, that he may indulge in all kinds of sinful excesses. In a word, men of every class and age are in restless pursuit of earthly possessions, so that we may apply to them the words of Holy Scripture: "All have turned aside into their own way, every one after his own gain, from the first even to the last" (Is. lvi, 11). "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life" (Eccles. xxxi, 8, 9). The eagerness to gain wealth is universal, though some desire money only in order to hoard it, whilst others seek it in order to spend it in gratifying their taste for self-indulgence; both classes alike are influenced by a spirit of selfishness, and are often guilty of gross injustice to others, being unwilling to allow anyone else to share their possessions.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the varieties of injustice, fraud and imposture to which a selfish man has recourse in order to get the better of his neighbor. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent" (Prov. xxviii, 20). "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. vi, 9). Any one who considers the usual behaviour of men will quickly be convinced of the truth of St. Paul's words. There are, thank God, many who are honest in their dealings and avoid all injustice to others, but there are also many who accumulate wealth by means of sharp practices in trade, by fraud, usury and cunning, or by taking good wages for bad work. Many employers of labor, in factories, mines and shops, oppress their working people and force them to work for

minimum wages, and the poor are reduced to such straits that they have neither courage nor means to assert their rights.

Some spend their money in ensnaring the weak, simple and down-trodden, who then become victims of their lust and ambition. But enough of this: the wages of the selfish are as a rule paths of injustice, cunning and malice, and can seldom be reconciled with the precepts of reason and Christianity.

Another evil resulting from selfishness is that those who think only of their own advantage, are hardhearted and uncharitable towards the poor and needy. They resemble Judas, who betrayed our Saviour; for St. John records that when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed our Lord's feet with precious ointment, Judas exclaimed: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" (John xii, 5). He did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was thinking of his own advantage, since he had charge of the purse in which were carried the alms bestowed on our Saviour and His disciples, and Judas used the money for his own purposes. Hence St. John adds: "He said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and, having the purse, carried the things that were put therein." No, a selfish man is not interested in the poor; no matter how great their distress may be, he is cold and indifferent, either because he cannot bring himself to part with his money, or because he is afraid of being obliged to deny himself some luxury, if he were to give anything to his starving brother. There are very many nowadays, like the rich man in the Gospel, ready to spend large sums on dress, amusements and luxuries, whilst the poor in their misery would gladly eat of the crumbs that fall from their employer's table. There are many who talk about the necessity of improving the condition of the working-classes, and yet forget all their fine theories the moment that a poor man asks them for some food or for a worn-out garment. Many are willing to contribute towards the support of some partisan, who has come down in the world, but they allow widows and children to suffer hunger. Others who earn more in a day than one of their own workmen earns in a month, nevertheless try to cut down the wages that they pay, and when their men are past work, trouble no more about those to whose labor they owe their wealth. Hard, indeed, is the lot of a man unfit for further employment, and if he is left unaided we can not wonder if he cherishes feelings of resentment against a

master in whose service he has worn himself out, and who neglects him and his family in their distress. Some employers begrudge food to their servants, whilst they and their children live in luxury. I should never finish, were I to attempt to make a complete list of the sins committed through selfishness. It causes the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy: "Because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold" (Matt. xxiv, 12).

Those who are self-interested have a bad disposition, and it is inevitable that in their case charity must grow cold; and when a man ceases to have charity towards his neighbors, they will come to hate him for his selfishness, and will be discontented with their position, especially if they have been robbed of their religion, which taught the poor to be patient and submissive for God's sake, and promised them the joys of heaven in compensation for the sorrows of life. The chief causes of discontent, especially among the lower classes, are selfishness and want of charity, which reveal themselves both in word and deed. "The desire of money," says St. Paul, "is the root of all evils" (1 Tim. vi, 10).

No one can deny that some classes of society enjoy an unfair advantage over others. There is great inequality in the distribution of wealth, for whilst a few are possessed of immense fortunes, thousands have nothing, and are devoid of all hope of ever being better off. The profits of labor often belong to the rich, whilst the workers are in abject poverty. A wealthy man makes money at the cost of the poor, and as the gulf between them widens, the discontent of the laborer increases. The latter seldom has any support upon which to rely in the misery and injustice that he has to endure. He can not have recourse to the rich, since they are, as a rule, his oppressors, and few of them are charitable enough to be at the pains of advising and helping him. If he seeks the protection of the law, he often fails to obtain it, through lack of means, for it is a notorious fact that legal proceedings are costly. Or he may not win his case, even if it is heard, for laws are like cobwebs, in which the little flies are caught, whilst big flies break a way through. All these things are sources of ill-will and hatred, that ferment in the minds of the poor and oppressed, and reveal themselves openly on the slightest provocation, so that the discontented masses are ready to believe any one, even the greatest scoundrel, who holds out to them some prospect of an improvement in their circumstances, and they are easily led to rebel against authority.

This is the state of affairs that prevails nowadays more or less in every part of the world.

These considerations will convince you that I have good reason to include selfishness among the chief faults of the age, and to maintain that no improvement is possible and that we must remain, as it were, on the edge of a volcano, as long as we do not apply the remedies that will avert its eruption and subdue its latent powers of destruction. What are these remedies? How can the evil results of selfishness be averted? Chiefly by means of a contented spirit, moderation and charity.

II. (a) However much we may exert ourselves, and however earnestly we may desire it, we shall never succeed in all acquiring as large a share of worldly possessions as we should like to have, partly because their distribution rests with God, and partly because the cravings of the human heart are insatiable. The world has existed for thousands of years, but we have no record of any period when men all enjoyed equal possessions and were all contented. Whoever therefore demands the gratification of all his desires for worldly goods, demands an impossibility; he is like a dropsical person, whose thirst increases the more he drinks. The more we strive to gratify our desires, the stronger do they become, nor do they cease until they are silenced by death. What does it benefit a man to toil from morning till night, day after day, in a vain attempt to quiet his insatiable craving for riches? What does he gain thereby? Nothing but constant anxiety, trouble and fear; and even should he be successful, death will overtake him unawares, and he will have to leave what he has acquired with so much labor. He fares like the rich man in the Gospel: "The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits, and he thought within himself, saying: 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns and will build greater; and into them I will gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer.' But God said to him: 'Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?'" (Luke xii, 16-20).

Let us beware of resembling this fool. Let us not allow our hearts to cling to the vain and perishable goods of this world,

which can never make us happy. "What doth it profit a man," said our Saviour, "if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26). And St. Paul writes: "Godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out; but having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. vi, 6-8). What we possess is ours, not by chance, nor by any stroke of luck, but by God's ordinance; He is our Father and knows best what is good for us, His children; He gives us what we need. What right have we then to grumble if He assigns to us only a small share of vain, perishable possessions? God can not make a mistake. Even our Saviour, though He was rich, became poor for our sake, that through His poverty we might be rich (2 Cor. viii, 9). He had not where to lay His head, and lived on alms with His disciples. He endured scorn and contempt, unjust and cruel treatment, and He died in agony on the Cross, and yet He was patient, and, like a lamb led to the slaughter, He opened not His mouth. Let us follow His example and tread in His footsteps. The Apostles, too, were poor men, continually persecuted and oppressed, and yet they rejoiced in tribulation, and were glad when they were deemed worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake. Let us be contented with our lot, and satisfied with what God gives us, however little it may be. Then we shall be richer and happier than a millionaire, for true riches depend, not upon worldly goods, but upon a contented spirit. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. vi, 6). "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv, 8). A Godly man, who in all things perceives, does and reverences God's will, and who is content with His ordinances, will be happy, not only in this world, in spite of poverty and want, but also in heaven, where he will receive the imperishable crown promised to those who love God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 3). A poor man fulfils God's will by displaying a contented spirit, and a wealthy man ought to fulfil it by means of charity.

(b) An unequal distribution of worldly goods is inevitable, because God has ordained it, yet it is not so unfair as it appears to be at first sight. On the contrary, according to God's design, it may and should be a source of merit to be acquired by the poor by their contentment, patience and resignation, and by the rich by

their active charity, which should bridge over the chasm separating rich and poor; and although they may still differ in respect of worldly possessions, the difference will no longer give rise to hostility between them. God created these possessions that each might have as much as he required for his support; hence one who accumulates as much as he can, without thinking of his fellow-creatures, interferes arbitrarily with the designs of Providence, and is also guilty of injustice, since other men have as much right as he has to have what is necessary to sustain life. God destines His gifts for all, and man ought to act as His steward, obeying His orders. Although God is absolutely free to dispose of all His creatures, He allows the widest possible scope to the action of man's free will and independence in using His gifts. If, as most infidels at the present day assert, it were absolutely necessary for all to possess an equal share of earthly goods, liberty would cease to exist. But God, who has given us free will, permits us to make use of our freedom; it is, however, His wish that in the acquisition and use of worldly possessions, we should be guided, not by a spirit of injustice and selfishness, but by a spirit of charity, that we may be like Him, who is charity itself, and who for love of us has created millions of things, both animate and inanimate, for our benefit and service. St. Paul bids us "be kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another . . . be followers of God, as most dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us" (Ephes. iv, 32; v, 1, 2). In another place the same Apostle writes: "In this present time let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance also may supply your want, and that there may be an equality" (2 Cor. viii, 14). This does not mean that every rich man is to distribute his goods to the poor, so that all may be equal, but that the rich should help the poor, so that they may be equal, not in the amount of their possessions, but in contentment and in the enjoyment of what is needful. If the rich allow their poorer brethren to share their temporal wealth, they in their turn will benefit by the spiritual wealth of the poor, viz., their prayers and merits, so that all may have what is necessary for their bodily and spiritual welfare.

I should never have done, were I to enumerate all the reasons impelling us to show active charity towards our neighbors. We can not love God unless we love our fellow creatures. "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need,

and shall harden his heart against him, how shall the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John iii, 17). Our Saviour insisted so frequently upon the necessity of love that it almost seems as if our prospect of salvation depends exclusively upon active works of charity. In their epistles all the apostles urge their disciples to practice mercy and charity, giving as their reason the fact that we are all members of one great body, of which Christ is the head. If I were to discuss all these points in detail, to prove to you the absolute need of charity, my sermon would never be finished; but no proof is required, for no one doubts that it is our duty to show love and mercy towards our neighbors. There is within our hearts a natural tendency to sympathize with others and to share their joys and sorrows. The voice of our intellect as well as of our conscience agrees with the teaching of Christianity on this subject, and if we are faithful in the discharge of this duty, we shall enjoy the greatest and purest happiness in this world, and shall look forward with glad assurance to life everlasting.

Yet, although it is plainly our duty to be charitable, no one can deny that many people disregard this obligation, and that consequently selfishness and injustice abound among those with large possessions, whilst the poor are discontented and complain bitterly of their privations and misery. If we desire peace to reign in our midst, we must practise charity, not the sort of charity that is the outcome of a momentary impulse to alleviate distress—for this has no force or permanence, and is not really charity at all—but the charity that proceeds from living faith, and derives all its energy from the same source. This is the charity that prevailed in the early Church, and caused all men to wonder at the self-sacrifice displayed by Christians in their dealings with one another; this is the charity that roused the amazement of the pagan world, and brought the heathen in thousands to the foot of the Cross; this is the charity that has founded and maintained innumerable good works in the Catholic Church; this is the charity that animated St. Francis of Assisi, St. Vincent de Paul and a countless host of men and women who, renouncing all the pleasures of the world, have devoted themselves wholly to the service of the sick and poor for the sake of Christ; this is the charity described by St. Paul, when he says: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth

not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii, 4-7).

When this charity once more reigns supreme amongst us, we shall no longer value a man according to his possessions, but according to the good that he does to his neighbors; each individual will cease to seek exclusively his own advantage, and will strive to benefit others as well as himself; men that have an abundance will supply the needs of the poor; there will be no selfishness or injustice on the part of employers, and no discontent and envy on the part of their working people, for each will be satisfied with what he has, and in patience and resignation will submit to God's holy will.

We read in history of the pagan emperor Alexander Severus, who was fond of saying: "Never do to another what you would not like to suffer yourself." He caused these words to be written up in many parts of his house, so that he might never forget to make them his rule of life. Would that we too impressed this maxim well on our minds, as well as our Saviour's precept: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them" (Matt. vii, 12). St. Paul, too, says: "Do not forget to do good and to impart, for by such sacrifices God's favor is obtained" (Hebr. xiii, 16). Surely this ought to be our constant rule, directing all our actions! It will also ensure our salvation, since, as St. John Chrysostom says: "If the poor plead our cause at the last day, our salvation will be assured; but if they appear as witnesses against us, our condemnation will be inevitable." Amen.

V. AMBITION

"You know that the princes of the gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister, and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant."—Matt. xx, 25-27.

Our Saviour uttered these weighty words on the occasion of a noteworthy occurrence that took place whilst He was making His last journey to Jerusalem. The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Him with her two sons, adoring Him and beseeching that He would give them the place of honor in His kingdom, and allow them to sit one on His right hand and the other on His left. It seems strange that these two disciples, who knew our Lord so intimately, should let their mother ask such a favor, and thus reveal an ambitious spirit. We can account for it, however, if we remember that the Holy Ghost had not yet descended upon the Apostles, so that they were not yet filled with humility, and their request shows at least that they deemed it the highest happiness to be near their Master. Our Saviour recognized the love that prompted their petition, and did not reprove them sternly, but said gently: "You know not what you ask." He told them that membership of His kingdom, the Church, did not confer any worldly advantage, but involved on the contrary suffering, endurance and self-denying service, and even were they willing to submit to all these things, the privilege that they sought could be bestowed only by His heavenly Father. When the other Apostles heard these words they were indignant at the ambition of the two brothers, but Jesus said to them: "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister, and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant." The Apostles were not to suppose that in their Lord's kingdom the sovereignty resembled that of ordinary states, in which princes issue arbitrary commands to their subjects and exhort obedience from them. Although in Christ's kingdom there were to be differences of rank, and some were to command and others to obey, yet the superiors were really to serve the inferiors, and devote themselves to their welfare. This is the spirit of Christianity, a spirit of humility, self-denial and self-sacrifice.

My brethren, if our Lord's own disciples gave way to ambition, is it any wonder that many people at the present day are addicted to the same vice? "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii, 31). Like earthly possessions, so do worldly honors exercise an extraordinary fascination over men, turning their heads, and preventing them from ever being at peace, until they have attained the highest social rank and the applause of the multitude. People desire not only to have wealth, but to enjoy great reputation, to be highly esteemed and to possess influence and power. This aspiration is one of the commonest failings of our age, and I have chosen it as the subject for my sermon to-day, for boundless ambition is due to the suggestions of the evil one.

I. Innate in every individual is a wish to be like God, and a kind of intolerance of all who are great and powerful. This feeling led our first parents to disobey God, and their sin has brought indescribable misery upon the whole human race. It has been the source of many evils, and especially of ambition and all its unhappy consequences. As long as men acknowledge God to be their supreme Lord and Judge, and as long as they take the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, our Divine Redeemer, as the rule of their thoughts and actions, they will keep their craving for earthly grandeur and distinction within reasonable limits, for they will give honor to God in all things, and will walk in humility and contentment along the paths which He assigns to them. But when Jesus Christ ceases to be their Master, Teacher and Guide, self-love will reign supreme in their hearts and dominate all their thoughts, words and works. This self-love, or, as it is called in Holy Scripture, pride of life, has self as its one aim, seeks to exalt self and exacts from all a tribute of praise and adulation. It is completely opposed to the spirit of Christianity, and is a disturbing element in society, for it fills men's minds with madness and folly. From self-love springs ambition, a vain desire to rise to a level with others, or to occupy a superior position in which applause, fame and glory will fall to one's lot. Adam was dissatisfied with the dignity conferred upon him by his Creator, and aspired to becoming like God. In the same way, an ambitious man is never contented with the social position assigned to him, and aspires to something higher, where he will enjoy more honor, influence and glory. I said in our last discourse that greed for money and possessions is extremely common nowa-

days, and I may assert with equal assurance that ambition has infected every class, and poisons almost all hearts in a greater or less degree. Few are willing to acknowledge that they are influenced by a craving for honor and glory, but whoever carefully and honestly examines the motives underlying his words and actions will probably find that he is not free from a wish to shine in society and to win applause. Of course it is not always wrong to love honor and strive to acquire it. It is natural for every person to wish to stand well in the opinion of others, and to derive pleasure from the consciousness of enjoying their esteem; this feeling is so deeply implanted within us that it is hardly possible for it to be eradicated. Even a criminal tries to hide his repulsive and odious proceedings, since he fears the criticism and censure of those about him. But love of honor, being natural to all men may be a means of deterring them from sin, and of stimulating them to virtue.

If a man regards himself as made in the image of God, as redeemed by Jesus Christ and as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and if, in consequence, he not only respects himself but desires others to respect him, this is far from being reprehensible and sinful, and may be the means of urging him on to greater perfection. St. Paul tells us that God will reward with eternal life all who, "according to patience in good work, seek glory and honor and incorruption" (Rom. ii, 7). Therefore in calling ambition sinful, and in describing the pursuit of honor as reprehensible, I have no intention of condemning this desire to win recognition for the dignity that man enjoys in consequence of his redemption and sanctification; nor am I referring to any aspiration after virtue and God's approbation, but only to a vain craving after wordly honors, dignities and distinctions. This latter craving is much more common than the quest of true honor, pleasing in God's sight, and I can easily prove to you the accuracy of this statement. Let us look first at our children. Their hearts are still free from many violent emotions that disturb our peace, but they are not free from ambition. They wish to take precedence of others and to be praised by parents and teachers. Older boys and girls want to distinguish themselves and to attract attention by their dress. They are sad if their means do not suffice to purchase finery, and they envy those who can occupy a better position in society. Who does not like to be flattered for some advantage that he happens to possess? Who does not delight in the applause of relations and friends? In riper age

ambition increases rather than diminishes. Each wishes to surpass his neighbor, and to have more reputation and influence. Few are contented with their position and circumstances, if they see that others are better off. In many cases it would be quite possible for a workman to support his family upon his wages, but he knows some one of his own class who can spend more money on comforts and luxuries, and so he is discontented and has no peace of mind.

Many business men have all that they need, and could be happy, if they chose; but they are too ambitious to rest as long as others make greater profits than they do. Many want to be thought well-educated and refined, and force themselves into the ranks of those who are really their superiors. The most ignorant people often succeed in their attempts to push themselves forward, because at the present time intelligence, knowledge, modesty and virtue are not as highly esteemed as was formerly the case, and it is the fashion to be self-assertive, to run down others and to adopt a bold and rough manner. Truth can no longer raise her voice without arousing a storm of abuse, and virtue is compelled to withdraw into some secret hiding-place to avoid the risk of being called stupidity and narrow-mindedness, whilst ignorance, error and license triumph openly. Hence it is easy enough nowadays to pose as intellectual and enlightened, and it is no longer necessary to acquire knowledge with labor and exertion; men no longer are at pains of learning by experience before thinking themselves qualified to express an opinion on public affairs; they do not care to win the respect and esteem of their fellow countrymen by a life of honest industry; they are quite content to talk about everything, whether they understand it or not, to proclaim their views on every imaginable topic, and to attract attention by their bold and presumptuous bearing. If they can do this, they are satisfied, for they fancy that they possess the means of ensuring their own happiness and of winning applause from others.

I need hardly point out that their aims are as reprehensible as are the means that they adopt in order to attain them. An ambitious man does not scruple to employ any means, if only he can rise to a more conspicuous position. He stoops to base practices from which a straightforward man would shrink; he has recourse to fraud and hypocrisy that are condemned both by common sense and Christianity; he disparages and slanders his neighbors; he is disloyal to duty and religion, and he even sacrifices virtue and in-

nocence on the altar of his ambition. In a word—to an ambitious man nothing is sacred, if only he can gratify his craving for spurious honors. A workman, for instance, who wishes to rise and attract attention, praises his own work and criticizes that of others; he parades his own honesty and skill, and questions the ability and trustworthiness of his fellows. A vain girl, anxious to curry favor with worldly people, practises the art of pleasing and deceiving others; she procures all sorts of tawdry finery, and frequently falls into vice, if she cannot otherwise indulge her taste for dress. An ambitious youth runs after men who have made a name for themselves, for he hopes to learn from them how to do the same; and he soon perceives that he need only run down religion, law and authority, abuse individuals and the general state of affairs, and boldly disregard all order and discipline. He is not slow to practise what he has learnt, and finally outstrips his masters.

How do the various political parties act at elections? One party decries another, extols itself, and makes the most exaggerated promises as to what it will accomplish, should it win the day. Candidates for office cringe and flatter the electors, and put up with everything, if only they can secure votes. If they are elected, they have to exert themselves to the utmost, in order to retain their position. The mob resembled a spoiled child, never satisfied unless his parents give him what it wants. So do the masses applaud their idol as long as he humors their whims and flatters their fancies; but they discard him unmercifully as soon as he ceases to do so, or when a more plausible speaker appears upon the scene. Ambition is the keynote to the actions of both candidates and voters.

There is perhaps no passion that causes men so much suffering as ambition. It leaves them no rest and is every day the source of fresh bitterness. If after laborious efforts an ambitious man attains his end, and reaches a higher and more honorable position, he at once perceives something else that is still beyond him. The same thing happens again and again; he is always trying to rise, and is restless and dissatisfied. Should he, however, fail to secure the coveted promotion, he is sad and depressed, and detests and envies his more successful rivals. Consider, my brethren, what will be the result if this incessant craving for honor, glory, influence and power becomes universal. What will happen if no one is contented with his position and circumstances, and if all aspire to what is out of their reach, in their anxiety to gratify their ambition? Not only

men of mature age, but even mere boys, devoid of all experience and knowledge, push themselves forward, and claim a right to direct the destiny of their nation, and to interfere in the government. When such people by their words and writings are continually stirring up the masses, using even the worst means in order to acquire fame and notoriety, it is impossible for any good to result. The more ambition abounds, the more is the peace of nations endangered. Ambition lies at the root of most of the evils so prevalent at the present time among men of every rank and age, and if there were less ambition, we should not have to complain of so much discontent, envy, hypocrisy, fraud, jealousy, vituperation, strife and discord; there would be less foolish emulation, less boastful display, and fewer disturbances, for, as it is, the peace and security, both of individuals and of the community, are constantly threatened, and we may well believe that even worse evils are impending.

If everyone were contented with his lot, he would not think it worth while to envy his superiors. If all were animated with the Christian spirit of humility and charity, we would bless rather than curse, and our blessing would be returned. Inferiors would not murmur at their superiors, nor would the latter despise the lowly, weak and helpless members of society. If we were not ambitious, we should regard those around us as our brethren, loving and respecting them, and not attempting to raise ourselves above them; there would be no tendency to rebel against law and order, for none would cherish feelings of arrogance and self-assertiveness. Christian humility and faithful, persevering industry in the calling assigned to us by God are the only means whereby we can protect ourselves against ambition, and the innumerable evils that result from it.

II. My brethren: if we did our best always to walk in accordance with our high dignity and destiny, and thus to honor God and render ourselves worthy of the esteem of our neighbors, our efforts would be by no means reprehensible, in fact, they would do much to keep us from sin and to make us persevere in virtue. Few, however, strive after honor in this way; what the world calls honor is really mere vanity and vainglory. We do not seek to distinguish ourselves by the goodness of our lives and our active, self-sacrificing charity, but we have recourse to pitiable, mean devices, and so we fail to attain our goal; we may be envied by fools, but we are the

laughing-stock of the wise. Are the advantages, at which we aim, really so highly esteemed by the world, as to justify the efforts that we make to secure them? Let us look into the matter, and see whether there is any justification for our love of display and for our ambition.

The chief objects of ambition are, as a rule, high position, reputation, knowledge, recognition of merits, external display and wealth. What do all these amount to? Do they really promote virtue and establish a man's worth? No, his worth is by no means determined by his name and reputation amongst men, nor do they affect his value in God's sight. Glory and splendor do not promote peace and the happiness resulting from a good conscience. All human life begins and ends in the same way; all, whether kings or beggars, must die. All our knowledge is merely fragmentary, and the more a man learns, the more is he convinced that what he does not know is infinitely greater in amount than what he knows. Much of the learning, of which men boast, is utterly worthless. They think themselves clever if they can criticize or ridicule others, if they can make unseemling jests and defile innocent minds by foul conversations. They are proud of their ability to depreciate all existing institutions and to drag what is sacred down to the dust. In order to be considered broadminded and enlightened a man must be a slanderer, a liar and a hypocrite; he must set about reforming the universe, jeering at religion and denying all that is holy. Can fame won by such means be worth having? No, my brethren; if a true reputation for intelligence and broadmindedness were to be gained in such a way, the devil would be more intelligent and broadminded than anyone else, for he is a master of all these arts. Have we any right to boast of our merits? Surely not, for any merit, that we possess, we owe to God's grace, and it would be the height of folly and presumption to glory in what is not our own. What can be said on behalf of outward pomp and display? They are the adornments of a body that will soon fall a victim to death, and will decay in the grave. Earthly riches can never bestow true dignity and honor, for they are vain, deceitful and transitory.

Let us never strive after these things in the hope of thus winning honor and glory. A craving to be exalted above others manifests itself in a disposition to aim at fame, influence, power and display; it is really mere folly and madness, totally opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which inculcates modesty and humility,

St. Peter was addressing all Christians, when he wrote: "Do ye all insinuate humility one to another, for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace" (I Peter v, 5). We shall discover ground enough for self-abasement, if we consider the inexhaustible source of ruin, that dwells in every human heart, and recall the multitude of evil tendencies to which we are so ready to yield. Our lives are stained with sin; in sin we are conceived, and born, in sin we live and in sin perhaps we shall die. If we boast and extol ourselves, if we fancy ourselves to be something, whereas we are nothing but poor, sinful mortals, are we not displaying our folly? Does it not beseem us rather to be humble, instead of trying to exalt ourselves above others and to acquire things, that may be important and valuable in the sight of men, but are absolutely worthless in the sight of God and from the point of view of Christianity? No human being ever possessed greater honor and glory than David, and yet, when he was at the apex of his power, he said: "Before the Lord, who chose me—and commanded me to be ruler over the people of the Lord in Israel, I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes" (2 Kings vi, 21, 22).

Our divine Redeemer set us an example of humility, for although He was in the glory of the Father, before the creation of the world, He humbled Himself for our sake, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He, the Lord and Ruler of all things, came into the world, not to reign as king or to be served, but to be the servant of all, in order to serve, raise and save all mankind. When honors were offered Him, He refused them, and escaped when the people proposed to make Him king. He sought not His own glory, but the glory of His heavenly Father. On the eve of His Passion He gave a most beautiful and touching proof of His humility. Having assembled His disciples, in order to eat the paschal lamb with them for the last time, He washed their feet, saying: "If I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also . . . The servant is not greater than his lord, neither is the apostle greater than he that sent him" (John xiii, 14-16). Jesus, Almighty God's own Son, could say to His enemies: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" yet He cared nothing for worldly honor and was the

servant of all. Does it not therefore behoove us to be humble, since we are nothing and have nothing of which to boast, for we are all sinners, devoid of merit in God's sight? Let us then follow our Saviour's example; let us humble ourselves before the Lord; let us not trouble about the vain and transitory honors of this world, nor try to raise ourselves above our neighbors, but let us be contented with the position in which Providence has placed us. As St. Paul says, let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. v, 26). The world would be a paradise if all its inhabitants were humble!

If we wish really to distinguish ourselves, and to win true honor and lasting glory, let us make it our chief aim to promote God's honor by doing His will with loyalty and perseverance in the place and circumstances in which He has set us. The light of our good works should shine abroad, so that our heavenly Father may be glorified.

God assigns to every one his position and calling in society, and it matters nothing whether a man's rank is high or low; all that is of real importance is whether he discharges the duties and obligations of his rank with fidelity and zeal. A community is made up of people of all classes, each is required by the rest, just as, in the human body, each member is necessary, however insignificant it may appear. The hand cannot complain of being a hand, nor the foot of being a foot, nor ought any person to complain of the position that he occupies, but it behooves each to do his best to fulfil the duties of his station. Just as in the human body, the foot and the hand cannot be the eye, so in society it is not possible for each man to be great and influential; yet each can win imperishable glory by faithfully doing his duty, not struggling to rise above the position assigned him by God, nor setting his hopes and aspirations on vain and worthless things.

The chief aim of every man should be to save his soul. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man" (Eccles. xii, 13), *i. e.*, this is all that is required of man, for this alone brings him true honor and eternal life. Hence our Saviour said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things shall be added unto you" (Luke xii, 31). We seek the Kingdom of God and secure the salvation of our immortal souls when we obey God's commandments, and are industrious at our daily work. All, even the poorest and lowest, can do this, for all are God's

children, called to inherit His kingdom; all, both high and low, have been redeemed with the precious Blood of Christ, and with God's aid are able to work out their salvation. "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Persevere therefore in your daily work, no matter how distasteful and obscure it may be; your station was fixed for you by God, and ordered by Him in His wisdom; accept it and respect it as coming from Him. "Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity" (Eph. iv, 1, 2). Aim above all things at the one thing needful, viz., the kingdom of God and His justice, and be sure that all other things, especially God's grace, will be given you. Without grace we can do nothing, but with it we can live at peace, each in his own position and calling, and can work out our own salvation. Amen.

VI. THE LOVE OF PLEASURE AND LUXURY

"Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly."—Luke xxi, 34.

To-day we are reminded of our Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem. After raising Lazarus from the dead in Bethany, He went to the holy city for the Pasch, escorted by a great multitude of people, who had witnessed the miracle. As He approached the city, the crowd increased and their enthusiasm for Him rose higher and higher. They desired to form a solemn procession, so Christ ordered His disciples to fetch a she-ass, on which He rode, whilst the people spread their garments on the way, and strewed the road with branches broken from the trees; the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matth. xxi, 9).

A vivid description of this triumphal procession is given us in the gospel, and the shouts of "Hosanna," with which the multitude greeted the Prince of Peace, typify the exultation of mankind at their redemption by Christ. He came to remove the curse resting upon our sinful race and to restore peace to men. Hence at His birth the angels sang at Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." In remembrance of the joys of the true peace brought us by our Saviour, palm branches, a symbol of peace and joy, are blessed each year on this Sunday.

It is indeed true that Christ established peace between heaven and earth, but many persons are still far from being partakers in it. Deep in the heart of every one of us is a craving for peace, and we all strive to attain it, some in one way, some in another, but it is nowhere to be found save in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. We have already seen that peace of mind does not depend on earthly possessions or a high position in the world. Let us try to-day to discover whether indulgence in luxury and pleasure is likely to secure for us a true and lasting peace. There are vast numbers of people nowadays who seek happiness in enjoyment, and many would be disposed to say that it constitutes men's greatest satisfaction on earth. We shall see, however, that this is not the case, and that, on the contrary, an inordinate craving for earthly pleasures destroys the peace and happiness of individuals and of society in

general. True peace and prosperity are to be found only in Christian self-denial and moderation.

I. As soon as a human being becomes capable of serious thought, and of deliberately choosing some pursuit with reference to a definite aim, he is impelled to do his utmost to secure for himself prosperity, peace and contentment. If he is guided by the light of reason and revelation; if he recognizes God as the highest good, and realises that perfect happiness consists in the possession of this good, then he will aim first and foremost at the kingdom of God and His justice, and will strive to live a good life in God's service. If, however, in his quest of happiness he forgets his high calling, and never thinks of God, of his immortal soul, or of eternity, his instinctive desire for happiness will make him turn to the things of this world, and he will seek it in amusement and luxury. It was thus that the pagans, who knew not God, behaved; and yet God, our highest good, can alone satisfy the craving of the human heart for peace and joy. A Christian knows, or ought to know, that he was created for heaven, not for this world and its enjoyments, which can never satisfy him. He will never be at rest unless he possesses God, our supreme and absolute good.

Hence St. Paul, writing to the Christians at Thessalonica, says: "Brethren, we pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk, and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more. For you know what precepts I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles, that know not God" (I Thes. iv, 1-5). St. Peter tells us how the Gentiles, who knew not God, sought happiness, for he writes: "The time past is sufficient to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles, for them who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelling, banqueting, and unlawful worshipping of idols" (I Peter iv, 3). If the Apostle were writing to us, who profess to be Christians, and are well aware that such things are unseemly, I fear he would have just cause for upbraiding us with all these sins and vices, for our age has relapsed into the evils of antiquity, and it may well be said of our generation, as of that which existed before the deluge: "All flesh hath corrupted its way upon earth" (Gen. vi, 12).

Christians have forgotten that they ought not to love the world or the things of the world, and that he alone, who doth the will of God, hath eternal life. They take no pains to be holy, and so to merit supreme happiness with God in heaven. Like the Gentiles of old they seek happiness here on earth in riotousness, lusts, drunkenness, and all the other enjoyments which the world offers. If we wanted to describe the mode of life of many people at the present day, we might employ the language used by our Saviour in speaking of Dives, of whom He said that he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared delicately every day. If you look about you, you will see many who live thus, knowing no greater pleasure than to spend money lavishly on luxury and display. Would that there were amongst us none who belong to this class! Love of enjoyment is unfortunately so general, that there are very few altogether free from it, though they may seek to gratify their craving in a refined, not in a coarse manner. It would be an endless task to enumerate the various ways in which people seek enjoyment, and the forms of amusement and luxury that they have devised for their own delectation. There are innumerable things invented for the gratification of the eye, the ear and all the other senses, and all sorts of means for increasing, varying and refining the enjoyment afforded by these things, and for stimulating a desire for them, whenever it grows dull through surfeit and excess.

The ingenuity of man has produced thousands of things intended to beautify life in this world, and there are other things too, on which I cannot dwell, because St. Paul says they ought not even to be named amongst Christians. No elaborate argument is needed to prove that a taste for luxury and amusement exists among all classes. Millions of workers and machines are at work day after day, producing the means of gratifying this taste, and the materials used are brought from all parts of the world, and are, in many cases, procured with indescribable difficulty and danger. The rich spend extravagant sums on dress and display, and are continually discovering fresh requirements and amusements, whilst the lower classes do their utmost to rival their superiors in all these respects. Our dwelling houses are no longer characterized by simplicity and comfort, and few people prefer quiet domestic happiness to noisy, public entertainments. Every one is incessantly engaged in the restless pursuit of fresh forms of amusement, aiming at the greatest possible variety rather than at permanence. The saddest feat-

ure in all this is that no one stops to ask whether these amusements are lawful or not, and whether they will injure himself and others. No one has time for such reflections, which might diminish our taste for enjoyment. 'A young man, for instance, would hardly continue to lead a dissolute life, if he realized that he was ruining both his body and his soul. Married men would refrain from drinking to excess, if they thought of the scandal thus given to their innocent children, and the misery thus brought upon their families. Who would not break himself of the habit of drinking too much, if he seriously believed that he was shortening his life, and perhaps incurring eternal damnation? But in their mad desire for pleasure, men do not think of all these things; they do not care about duty or look forward to the future, if only they can have present enjoyment. Many workmen are industrious enough, but their wages are spent in the company of drunkards and gamblers, not on the support of their homes. The week's earnings are often squandered in a few hours, and nothing is left for wife and children. Frequently boys and girls are set to work, long before they are strong enough, in order that their parents may be free to enjoy themselves. In many a household there is misery and want, year after year, because sin continues to reign supreme. In every town and village there are people, who by their industry and frugality have won for themselves a comfortable livelihood and the respect of their neighbors. Those, however, who spend every penny as soon as they get it, will never prosper. Religion dies out, when everything has to yield to a love of amusement; and, where men no longer believe in God and in a future retribution, they cease to discriminate between lawful and forbidden pleasures, and act as if they could do whatever they liked. They shrink from nothing that will gratify their passions; they override all obstacles to their self-indulgence. This is an inevitable result of their ceasing to fear God and the judgment, as then there is nothing else to fear. Why should they attend to the voice of conscience, or to the prayers of relatives and the warnings to friends? Everything must be sacrificed to their craving for luxury and amusement. On all sides we hear complaints of dishonesty, untruthfulness and theft; the poor grumble at their hard lot, and at their inability to procure for themselves all the comforts enjoyed by the rich. If this state of affairs continues, it will lead to the impoverishment, degeneration and ruin of all classes. The number of idlers will increase in pro-

portion as that of workers diminishes; and men who are too lazy or too effeminate to work, will soon lay hands on the property of others.

In recent years we have heard agitators loudly protesting that all ownership is robbery, and that the possessions of all ought to be distributed equally. The same people tell us that only fools hope for a better life beyond the grave, and that therefore a reasonable man must enjoy this present life to the utmost, since death ends everything. They look forward apparently to a golden age, when each man will be as rich as his neighbor, and can take as his motto: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die" (Is. xxii, 13). Many have been misled by these false prophets, and in anticipation of future prosperity, have parted with their savings, and have given up work, thus plunging themselves and those dependent upon them into poverty. We have great reason to fear that these pernicious doctrines are spreading far and wide among the working classes.

If any one possesses no hope of future happiness, he must inevitably fall a victim to despair, which impels him to commit most horrible crimes, if he fails to secure prosperity in this life. It is therefore diabolical cruelty to rob the down-trodden and oppressed of their faith and hope. Alleviation for the manifold troubles of mankind is to be found in firm faith in the teaching of Christianity, not in any revolutionary schemes devised by human beings. Men must be taught that they are created, not for this world nor for the joys that it can offer, but for another better life beyond the grave, where they will be happy for ever in the possession of God, Who is infinite goodness. No one animated by this belief will over-value the good things of this world, but will regard them merely as means for attaining the end for which he is destined, and so he will make use often with moderation and self-control.

II. Christianity does not forbid all pleasures, but only such as are sinful. As St. Paul says: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. iv, 4). In another passage the same Apostle writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice" (Phil. iv, 4). That is to say: Rejoice in such a way, that in the midst of your enjoyment you can think of God, remember that He is the Giver of all good gifts, and be thankful. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x, 31). Yet,

though it is true that a Christian may partake in lawful pleasures, it is equally true that he ought to be so far master of himself, as to be able to deny himself even a lawful pleasure for the sake of some higher end. That is why our Saviour said to His disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi, 24).

From a Christian point of view, what must we think of a man whose mind is set on sensual pleasures, and who is always eager to participate in anything that would gratify his senses? He is an animal, pure and simple, without higher aspirations and apparently indifferent to his true dignity as a being made in the likeness of God, to his position as heir of the kingdom of heaven, and to the glorious destiny that should be his own. Does such a man deserve to be called after One Who said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me?" (Matth. xvi, 24). Does he deserve to be included among the members of Christ's Church, of which the Apostle writes: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" (Rom. xiv, 17). No, my brethren, one whose whole mind is set upon sensual pleasures and who seeks in them his supreme happiness, has put himself on a level with the beasts, is false to his high calling and dignity, and has become a slave to his desires and passions. He refuses to serve God, but is in bondage to his animal lusts and instincts; he has fallen away from Christianity, since, as St. Paul says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii, 9), and the spirit of Christ is one of self-denial and renunciation. Although we are allowed to enjoy earthly pleasures, a Christian ought never to forget his dignity, and should be able to renounce all such joys for the sake of God, and for his own good and that of his neighbors. A Christian will act, not according to his animal instincts, but according to the teaching of his religion. He must know how to enjoy and how to refrain, remembering the Apostle's words: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Man was not created in order to eat, drink and be merry, nor can he find true happiness in these things; he was made to fulfill God's Will, and to find thus true

peace and eternal gladness. "Fear God and keep His Commandments, for this is all man" (Eccles. xii, 13). On one occasion our Saviour's zeal in teaching caused Him to disregard the ordinary mealtime, so His disciples besought Him to eat, and He replied: "I have meat to eat which you know not. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv, 32, 34). We are not put into the world to eat, drink and be comfortable, but to do God's Will, and so work out our salvation. If we know that our treasure is laid up in heaven, we shall not ask for much in this world; our desires will easily be satisfied; we shall not envy those who, like Dives in the parable, are dressed in purple and fine linen and live in luxury, for we shall remember that we have a higher destiny. Dives was cast into hell because he cared for nothing but amusements and luxuries, whilst poor Lazarus, who enjoyed no happiness here below, was carried to Abraham's bosom, *i. e.*, to heaven. No one, who looks forward to the joys of heaven, repines if he has not so much pleasure here as the children of this world possess; he will say with the Apostle: "Everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. iv, 12).

Let us look at sensual pleasures from another point of view: a sensual man, who thinks only of enjoyment here below, inevitably shortens his life. Our own experience confirms the medical opinion that excessive luxury leads to untimely death. Moreover self-indulgence destroys all generous ardour in the young, and involves them in a career of crime, which leads to ruin here and hereafter. Everyone knows that a drunkard becomes incapable at last of using either his reason or his will; so that he says and does things utterly beneath the dignity of a human being, that make him a scandal and a laughing-stock to his neighbors. His household gradually falls into want, misery and disorder, and intemperance is a fertile source of discord and sorrow, for it destroys all family life. Many wives and children shed bitter tears over the drunken habits of those who ought to be their support; for when a man thinks about nothing but enjoying himself, he has no energy for work, he wastes his substance, falls deeper and deeper into sin, and finally is lost beyond hope of recovery. St. Paul tells us that many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. iii, 19). After all, what is the pleasure so

ardently desired that for its sake a man is willing to sacrifice his own health, position and peace of mind, and the happiness of those dependent upon him? It is a miserable, vain and worthless thing, lasting but a short time and ending in sorrow. A wise man once said: "In the cup of self-indulgence the froth is sweet, the draught itself is insipid, the after-taste is bitter and its effects are painful, if not deadly." A voluptuary lowers himself to the level of a beast, and the proud spirit within him is crushed and put to shame. When he dies, the channels of the senses are for ever closed, and the soul, that still remains alive, passes to a land where there is no eating and drinking, no luxury and adornment. Whoever seeks happiness here below, labors in vain, for the world can never satisfy the craving of the human heart. Its gifts soon cease to charm and pall on us by their monotony, and the mere thought of death is enough to deprive them of all attractiveness. Hence St. John admonishes us: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof, but he that doth the Will of God, abideth for ever" (I John ii, 15-17). St. Augustine experienced the truth of these words; he had every talent with which nature can endow a man, and was eager to satisfy his thirst for knowledge and happiness. He exhausted all the resources of the world, and tested its learning and pleasures, and at the end he made this notable confession: "Lord, Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

There is nothing better or more expedient than self-denial and moderation. These are virtues inculcated by the Cross of Christ, and all must acquire them, if they wish to be followers of Him Who had not where to lay His head, Who lived on alms, whose thirst was quenched with vinegar and gall, and Who suffered His Flesh to be nailed to the Cross, that we might be able to subdue the impure lusts of our flesh, and to triumph over it by His spirit. Self-denial makes a man master over his own desires and passions, and also over all earthly things, and it is a firm basis of happiness and a source of joy and contentment. Similar happiness is enjoyed by those who understand how to use with moderation the lawful pleasures of life. Moderation preserves our health, strength,

good spirits and energy of body and mind. It makes us ready and able to work with success. A temperate man is capable of discharging his duties as a Christian, a citizen and a husband; he has not only enough for himself, but something for his neighbor, and thus he can contribute toward the well-being of others.

Let us take to heart our Saviour's teaching on the subject of luxury and self-indulgence; let us remember that He said: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation; woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger; woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke vi, 24, 25), but "blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; blessed are ye that hunger now, for you shall be filled; blessed are ye that weep, for you shall laugh" (ibid. v, 20).

Do not forget, my brethren, that the good things of this world are only lent us, that we may use them in God's service, not that we may find in them our happiness; some day we shall have to account for the way in which we have employed them, and we do not know when that day will come. St. Paul says: "The time is short; it remaineth that they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away" (I Cor. vii, 29-31). Yes, this world with all that it has to offer will soon pass away; the joys of this life vanish like a dream, and even were it possible for a man to taste every imaginable pleasure, he would have to acknowledge at last that "All is vanity." Goodness and honesty afford a happiness truer and more permanent than the vain joys of this world. This happiness alone can satisfy the heart's desires, and it will last even in the next life; whereas he who makes pleasure his aim, is the slave of passions that will ultimately prove his destruction.

Never forget that you are invited to share in the marriage feast of our Lord in heaven, and beware of clinging to the things of earth. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26). He who devotes himself to adorning and feeding his body, cares only for the mortal part of himself, the part that sooner or later will be laid in the grave. Walk therefore not as slaves to your lusts, but as free men; not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Strive to know and do God's Will, and mortify

the lusts of the flesh, "for if you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, . . . and of sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii, 13-17). Amen.

VII. HUMAN RESPECT

GOOD FRIDAY SERMON

"Pilate sought to release Him; but the Jews cried out saying: 'If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend.'"—John xix, 12.

The Church calls upon us to-day to think with sorrow of our Saviour's death. Who would not grieve over the remembrance of the cruelties inflicted on the most innocent victim who ever lived, the greatest Benefactor of the human race? Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the eternal Father, challenged the ability even of His enemies to prove Him guilty of a single sin. In His love of us, He came to deliver us from the curse of sin, under which all mankind was groaning; all His works were prompted by charity, for as St. John says, He was charity; and yet He was misunderstood, hated, persecuted and ill-treated by the very people whom it was His desire to render happy; and finally He died as a criminal on the Cross. Pilate, the Roman governor, knew him to be innocent, and would gladly have released Him, but he feared the Jews, and still more the Roman Emperor. The people, instigated by the priests, Pharisees and scribes, cried out repeatedly: "If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend," and this cry drowned the inward voice of truth and justice, and finally the fear of losing his position, should the matter be reported to the Emperor, induced him to connive at the murder of One Who was innocent, and he delivered Jesus to the Jews to be crucified.

We should all without hesitation condemn Pilate for acting in so unjust and shameful a manner; but, in condemning him, we are condemning ourselves. Is it not a matter of every-day occurrence for us to disregard the claims of innocence, truth and religion, because we are afraid of putting ourselves at a disadvantage? Do we not often refrain from doing what we know to be right, thus becoming traitors to our own conscience? We are so weak that we turn a deaf ear to the voice of reason and conscience, through fear of ridicule. Yes, human respect, fear of the opinion of worldlings, is the cause of many sins both of omission and of commission, and I do not scruple to include this fear, and the want of courage and decision to which it gives rise, among the chief failings of the age in which we live. I want (1) to show you to-day how unworthy of a Christian such fear is, and to what disastrous re-

sults it leads; and (2) to encourage you resolutely to follow what Christianity teaches to be the right course. May He strengthen us, Who on this day overcame the world, and bore testimony with His Blood to truth and justice!

I. Although the number of the wicked is no doubt very great, it is certainly exaggerated by some fanatics, who consider themselves, and those who agree with them, to be just and holy, and God's elect, whilst they declare all other people to be hopeless sinners and children of the devil. Many behave outwardly like the children of this world, but are by no means bad or godless at heart; they are, on the contrary, convinced of the necessity of faith and virtue; and it is only their fear of the world's opinion that prevents them from living in accordance of Christianity. They are timid by nature, and have not enough courage to withstand the spirit of the age, though they are ready to condemn it. They conform to the world, either because they are eager to win its applause, or because they dread its censure. They desire to be the friends of God, but at the same time wish to stand well with the world. In short, as Isaias says, they halt between two opinions. Even amongst those who allow themselves apparently to be dominated by the spirit of worldliness, there must be many who accept the truth proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and desire the salvation that He obtained for us by His death on the Cross. Now and then they feel dissatisfied with themselves and the life that they are leading, and long for peace and consolation; yet their dissatisfaction and longing are not strong enough to enable them to overcome their human respect. They would fain, like Nicodemus, come by night to their Lord and Master, if only by day they could conform to the ways of the world, or if at least they need not openly withstand the spirit of worldliness; if this were possible, they would not renounce Christianity altogether. But, as they have to choose between Christ and the world, and as they must either appear ignorant and narrow-minded in the eyes of men, or slaves of sin in the sight of God, they prefer to incur the censure of Christ and His Church, rather than that of the world. They maintain that, being in the world, it behooves them to adopt its spirit, and they think it unwise to draw upon themselves the ridicule of those with whom they have hitherto been on good terms. Many a man through mere thoughtlessness, has joined the ranks of the socialists, who, having given up all religion, have adopted most dangerous prin-

principles. He sees perhaps that, in associating with such people, he risks incurring grave injury both in body and soul, but he cannot get rid of them, because he dreads their ridicule and hostility. Sometimes in society all that we hold sacred is discussed in a contemptuous and blasphemous manner; the conscience of some of those present may urge them to speak in defence of God's honor and of religion, but false shame constrains them to keep silence, or even to acquiesce in what is said. Sometimes slanderous tongues assail our neighbor's honor and good reputation, but we dare not come forward to bear witness to truth, and to rebuke the calumniators, because we fear to give offence or to draw their ridicule upon ourselves. Others again, through human respect, refrain from acknowledging themselves to be Catholics, and from practising their religion. Others are too timid to resist the disastrous tendencies of the age, to renounce what is forbidden, to correct faults, and to insist upon the discharge of duties. They say that they do not like to hurt other people's feelings, or to be on bad terms with their neighbors. There are therefore a great many sins of omission due to human respect and fear of the world's opinion, but the number of the actual sins committed for the same reason is far greater. For fears of the Jews Pilate handed our Divine Lord over to the rabble to be crucified; through human respect Peter denied his Master, and the same motive has induced hundreds, at times of persecution, to be false to Christ. The same dread of criticism impels many at the present day to join in mocking at religion, and in blaspheming what they have hitherto held sacred. Like the Jews of old they take up stones, as it were, to cast at Christ and at those who acknowledge Him to be the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, and who cling to Him as their only Saviour. Lest they should cease to be regarded as enlightened and broad-minded, many adopt views that must inevitably lead to destruction, and promote undertakings which aim at the ruin of society. They subscribe toward the support of newspapers and periodicals that are sowing seeds of unbelief and immorality broadcast amongst the people, and are poisoning the minds of both young and old. Fear of being thought bigoted and narrow-minded forces many to imitate the behavior of the children of this world, to join in their profane and immoral conversations and songs, and to calumniate their neighbors. Not a few sacrifice their innocence and virtue rather than forego any temporal advantage.

Such dependence upon public opinion and such cringing to the spirit of the age are utterly unworthy of Christians. What would have become of the Church if the Apostles, when brought before rulers and councils, had kept silence or had denied Christ through fear of punishment? They did not fear men rather than God; no, they boldly asked their judges to decide whether it would be right for them to do so. They departed from the judgment hall rejoicing if they were accounted worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus. When a soldier runs away, fearing to be wounded or killed, we call him a coward. Is not every man a coward who, for fear of others, refrains from bearing witness to the truth, from doing his duty and from standing up for right and justice? Yes, he is a coward, and, what is worse, he is a slave to other men. Slavery is the most degraded and contemptible state in which a man can be, because he belongs to his owner, not to himself, and has to act in accordance with his master's will. Is not a man really a slave who conforms in all respects to the opinion of the world? He is no longer at liberty to control his own actions, but he must yield to the whims of others. He cannot take any step without first considering what others will think of him; he dares not rebuke a knave who mocks at what is sacred and drags virtue through the mire; no, he is silent, when it behooves him to speak out boldly. He adapts himself to the tastes and habits of the majority, and is their slave, when he might and should be free. And who are as a rule the people whose criticism, disapproval, ridicule and ill-will he dreads so intensely as to sacrifice to them his own convictions and independence? They are mostly wicked, shameless, dissolute and immoral; they have no faith, no fear of God, no love of virtue; they are, in short, sinners, under the control of the devil, in whose service they are luring souls to perdition. These are the people whom we are afraid to offend; we act in accordance with their opinions because we fear their ridicule, threats and hostility; we sacrifice to them our liberty, honor and future happiness. Is this not the most shameful and dishonorable degradation for Christians who at their baptism became children of God, and who ought to fear nothing except offending their heavenly Father?

You see, my brethren, how disastrous and disgraceful a thing it is for a Christian to fear the judgment of the world and to be a slave to its spirit. We ought to be guided, not by the world, but by our own conscience and the teaching of our holy religion, and tread

the path assigned to us with decision, courage and perseverance.

II. History records a touching event in the life of the Frankish king, Clodwig. One day St. Remigius was telling him the story of our Saviour's Passion, and the king, deeply moved, exclaimed: "Had I been present with my warriors, He would never have been crucified." If we think of our Lord's sufferings and of His shameful death on the Cross, and if we reflect that He underwent so much in spite of His perfect innocence, we shall feel inclined to agree with the Frankish king. Yet every day Christ is crucified anew; He is crucified whenever the truth is persecuted and suppressed, and His holy law is despised and violated. Few are brave enough to defend His honor and to stand up for His cause, and we may actually doubt whether Christ, if He came again, would fare better now than He did 1900 years ago. There is urgent need at the present time for decision in thought, word and action, since the spirit of worldliness stalks abroad boldly, striving to subjugate the minds of all; and a conflict is raging between this spirit and the Spirit of God, a conflict upon the issue of which depend both the temporal and external welfare of the individual, as well as of the whole human race. Each man has to decide whether he will take up his stand on the side of God or of the world; whether he will be numbered among the followers of Christ or of Belial, among the children of light or of darkness. Lukewarmness and irresolution are always bad, but they are unpardonable where our highest interests are at stake. He is a traitor to the cause of right and justice who does not come forward to defend what is good and holy, who is ashamed of his religion, who takes innumerable things into consideration, weighing all possible arguments for and against, before he ventures seriously to resist evil and to uphold truth, justice and morality. In order to see how fully the children of this world realize the need of courage and resolution in their undertakings, you have but to look at the methods employed by the socialists. They never hesitate, they know well enough what they want and what they are doing. Their designs are aimed at getting money, at enjoying luxury, at self-indulgence, at freedom from all restraints upon their passions and desires. They pursue their aims by means of persuasion and threats, by flattery, deception and ridicule; they display so much energy and perseverance in the dissemination of their doctrines, that one would suppose them to be intent upon founding an earthly paradise. If we fold our hands and do nothing,

being afraid to stand up for the right, whilst the children of this world toil indefatigably on the side of evil, must not the kingdom of God necessarily dwindle away? We ought to defend it; we ought fearlessly to draw attention to the bad intentions and designs of the wicked and Godless men in our midst, and to exert ourselves to frustrate them. We ought to employ all available means of bringing others back to a reasonable frame of mind, and of supplying antidotes to the poison that we encounter on every side. No one who is in earnest about his religion, who loves God and justice; morality and order, and who desires the happiness and prosperity of his country, ought to stand aloof, shunning labor and exertion, ridicule and contempt. The children of this world toil day and night in order to attain their earthly goal; they endure hunger and thirst, heat and cold, poverty and danger. If they do and bear so much for the sake of treasures, that rust and moth can consume, and for enjoyments that vanish like smoke, leaving only a bitter savor behind them, how can we drink from hardships, when it is in our power to secure far higher and more permanent advantages, to promote the welfare of God's kingdom and the salvation of immortal souls? It may be very hard to resist the world, it may cost us a great deal to avoid the bad companions with whom we have hitherto associated and to break off connections of long standing; it may need much self-denial to renounce the forbidden amusements and luxuries in which we have indulged, and to sacrifice our reputation as broadminded and enlightened people; it may be very difficult to abandon the easy path of destruction, and to follow the steep and narrow way of virtue with stout and resolute hearts, but still we must not shrink from all these things, unless we are willing to be put to shame by the children of this world, to deny our faith, and to lose all prospect of salvation. If Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, had feared hardships, suffering and persecution, if He had shrunk from death, we should be still in our sins, with the curse of God resting on us. If the Apostles and their successors had consulted their own comfort, or had taken into account all the hindrances, perils, hostility that they encountered in preaching the Gospel, Christianity would have died out, and we should never have partaken in its blessings. But our Lord knew all this, and yet He said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that

takeh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (Matth. x, 37).

We must not avoid hardships and exertion, when we have an opportunity to promote the honor of God and His Church, and to secure the salvation of our souls; the world ought to have no influences over us. In this respect Christ has set us an example that it behooves us to follow. When He was asked: "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar?" He did not consider the danger to which a straightforward answer would expose Him, but said simply: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. xxi, 17, 21). He treated sinners with kindness, sitting with them at table, and caring nothing for the remarks made by the Pharisees, whom He openly upbraided as hypocrites, a generation of vipers and whited sepulchres, fair to behold from outside, but inwardly full of corruption. When men threatened to stone Him or to throw Him down a precipice, He remained calm, for He would far rather have died than have denied the truth or departed from the right way. It is our duty, too, never to surrender truth and justice; we may be despised as ignorant bigots; worldly people may regard us with hatred and scorn, instead of esteeming and applauding us; but truth, a good conscience and assurance of God's approval ought to be far more precious in our sight than anything that the world can offer. "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day," said St. Paul, "He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv, 3). The Apostle did not look upon men as his judges, nor did he trouble about their opinion. It was to him a matter of indifference whether he were praised or condemned by them, he cared nothing for their criticism, for he recognized one Master only, Who would be his Judge. If that Master were satisfied, St. Paul was happy; if He found fault, the applause of men could never reassure him. The Apostle's words reveal that true courage which inspires all who have a good conscience, and enjoy that peace of mind which is proof against all attacks. St. Augustine used to say: "Think what you like of me; if only I can please my God, I am content."

Let us therefore do our best to gain the recognition and respect of the world by leading an upright, honest and Christian life; but, if the world nevertheless withholds its approval, God and our own conscience will still bear testimony on our behalf, and this is worth far more than the favor and applause of people estranged from

Him, for it gives us sure hope of an eternal reward in His kingdom. Let us remember that our Saviour said: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v, 11, 12).

Let us have the courage of our own opinions, and profess our faith boldly and without wavering; let us not be influenced and misled by the children of this world, for neither their favor nor their ridicule can really affect us. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26). What good can it do us, if we are extolled as liberal, cultured and broadminded? This will not make us happy, if we win praise at the cost of our own souls. One thing only is needful—to fear God, and to work out our salvation; this brings peace and happiness here below, and everlasting life in heaven. Therefore fear not those who can kill the body, but are unable to injure the soul; fear rather him who has power to cast both body and soul into hell. Bear testimony boldly to the truth and follow the path of justice. The truth, that we profess, has no need to shroud itself in darkness, nor need virtue fear to assert itself in defiance of sin. At baptism we renounced the world, the flesh and the devil, and the cross was traced upon our brows, that we might never be ashamed openly to proclaim ourselves the followers of a crucified Saviour. If we always remembered Him, who shed His Blood and died on the Cross for us almost 1900 years ago, that He might redeem us, and that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness, we should esteem it our highest honor and glory to confess our faith frankly and fearlessly, in thought, word and deed, and we should look for happiness and salvation in the place where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. "Every one that shall confess me before men," says our Saviour, "I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven" (Matth. x, 32). But "he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty and that of His Father" (Luke ix, 26). We have therefore to choose between salvation and condemnation. If we decide to stand up for Christ against sin and the world, we shall be saved; if we prefer the world and its advantages to Christ, we shall be lost eternally. How can we hesitate for a single moment? Let us determine to adhere to Christ, who alone can save us; let us resolve

to confess Him and follow His example, no matter what the world may think. Then we shall each say, as St. Paul did: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii, 38, 39). Let us regard our earthly life as a serious, not a frivolous thing, and employ it conscientiously, remembering the Apostle's exhortation to "redeem the time, because the days are evil" (Ephes. v, 16). Let us work whilst it is yet day, for the night cometh, when no man can work. Let us not be led astray by those who have lost faith in God, but let us cling to the faith of our forefathers, which is the power of God to save all who profess it, and refuse to have fellowship with the children of unbelief, whose ways are evil and whose end is destruction. Let us be subject to every ordinance of man for God's sake, and let us follow our Saviour's example, for He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Let us resolve not to aim at the worthless honors of this world, nor at its esteem, but let us seek imperishable honor in God's presence, by the faithful discharge of all the obligations of our calling and position. Let us resolve no longer to make the pleasures and luxuries of the world our aim in life, nor to seek in them our happiness, but to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, being convinced that then all other things necessary for us will be provided. Let us fear neither the world nor the devil, not quail before the criticism, ridicule and persecution of wicked men, but ever keep our eyes fixed on Him Who is the author and finisher of our faith, and Who has set us an example that we ought to follow. Let us act as trusty servants, who fear nothing except to offend and displease God. He will help, support and sustain us by His grace, for the sake of our dear Lord, Who died for us, that we might have life in His Name.

O crucified Redeemer! By Thy Passion and Death Thou hast redeemed the world, and given us power to become God's children and heirs of His kingdom. Grant to us all true zeal and a right disposition, that we may live to Thee alone, and may follow Thee faithfully in this world, so that at last, on the great day of reckoning, we may be worthy to be numbered among Thine elect, and to be admitted to Thine everlasting kingdom. Amen.

